kʷu_sqʷaʔqʷaʔálx (We begin to speak): Our Journey within Nsyilxcn (Okanagan) Language Revitalization

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iwá iʔ_p̓isȧʔt iʔ_sqilxʷ cx̌ʷap tkɫkn̓xcutns
Mouse speaking to Grizzly Bear: Even a large person may need help.

Way', iskʷist Sʔimlaʔxʷ, uɫ kn_Syilx. I am an nsyilxcn language learner and teacher, living in Penticton, BC. I am Syilx. In this paper, I take the role of Xəxʔmaɫ (Fly), and share with you my caʔʷt, my role and responsibility, in revitalizing nsyilxcn. I am part of a small intermediate adult language cohort working to become proficient in nqilxʷcn (also referred to as nsyilxcn), and simultaneously developing a sqəlxʷcawt (a way of being, as sqilxʷ adult learners) for other adult learners to follow. As adult learners, our sqəlxʷcawt includes a role and responsibility to embrace successful language acquisition methods and to re-integrate our learning back into our homes and communities. My language cohort and I are building a lived-pedagogy based on a solid triadic foundation of intensive curricular study, conversation with Elders, and immersion amongst our-selves, as learners. Our language study is grounded in community as well as cutting-edge second-language acquisition techniques developed by the Paul Creek Language Association. This paper introduces Paul Creek curriculum, nsyilxcn language acquisition and revitalization concepts, and current initiatives in nsyilxcn adult language learning, including an adult immersion house in which I and my cohort lived for five months in 2011. I share dreams of a future that includes advanced proficiency for learn-ers and nsyilxcn's reintroduction to public and university domains.

Introduction

way̓ p_isnəqsílxʷ, p_isəxʷm̓am̓áyaʔm, p_islx̌láxt
iskʷíst Sʔímlaʔxʷ, uɫ kn_Syilx
inqʷúpsaʔ iʔ_skʷists twiʔ Lucy Akat Sʔímlaʔxʷ t'l_nk'maplqs
kʷu_aláʔ I̓_n̓wist sn̓m̓am̓áyaʔtn uɫ kʷu_sqʷaʔqʷaʔálx tə_sqəlxʷcawt[1]

First, before all other things, I introduce myself. I am Michele Johnson; when I teach nsyilxcn I am Sʔímlaʔxʷ. I am related to the Simla family in Vernon (nk'maplqs), British Columbia (BC), and the Richters in Ashnola, BC. I am Syilx (Okanagan), an nsyilxcn-speaking Interior-Salish language group from the Interior Plateau, straddling what is now known as the US-Canada border in southern British Columbia and Washington (WA). Syilx are also known as sqilxʷ, Okanagan, Okanagan-Colville, Interior Salish, and Salish. I am new to this territory and this language. There is more to this story[2]. Three years ago, I found my way back; they were expecting me.

Limlmt p_cyʕáp. I also need to address my audience and explain the context of this paper, the landscape of words you and I will travel through. I am an adult nsyilxcn language learner, intermediate speaker, and nsyilxcn teacher, and am focusing my PhD research on achieving nsyilxcn proficiency as a cohort, while actively working towards nsyilxcn language revitalization. I am grateful for your presence here. Now that I have introduced myself I can explain what we are doing here. We refer to our language as nsyilxcn, nqilxᵂcn, Okanagan, or simply *the language*. For me and for many of the Elders it is all about the language. Colonization has devastated Indigenous languages; nsyilxcn is no exception, and it is considered severely endangered (as defined by Norris, 2011, p. 130). However, there are many committed individuals dedicated to reversing the erasure of nsyilxcn. Our approach to language revitalization is simple and we know what we need to do: kᵂu_sqᵂaʔqᵂaʔálx. We are beginning to speak. We believe it will be helpful to other learners to document our approach and our emerging community-based pedagogical techniques on our road to language proficiency and revitalization. We are all in this together.

In this paper, I will share with you my perspective on the role and responsibility of adult language learners in Indigenous language revitalization, or what we refer to as our caʕᵂt. I introduce nqilxᵂcn and nsyilxcn[3], the language, and outline Syilx concepts that are relevant to Indigenous language acquisition and revitalization, and the role of adult nsyilxcn language learners. I will tell you about sqəlxᵂcawt, nsyilxcn phases of language acquisition, and about Xəxʔmał, a brave individual who made a difference. I outline current initiatives in adult nsyilxcn language programs, particularly the adult immersion house organized by the Paul Creek Language Association, where I lived with a cohort of five women for five months in 2011. Finally, I share dreams of a future where nsyilxcn is reintroduced to public domains.

In Indigenous research it is important to define our own terms, to state our research goals from within our own cultural framework, and to stand our ground (Akiwenzie-Damm, 1996; Cohen, 2010; Deloria, 1995; Geniusz, 2009; Grande, 2008; Meyer, 2001; Wilson, 2008). To speak in any other way would be to become ńqəẏus k̓ᵂłpaʕx̌mín or two-minded, the uncomfortable condition resulting from speaking one way while believing another. It is also important to reflect one's personal, experiential, and relational connection to the topic (Armstrong, 2006; Jack, 2010; Meyer, 2008; Sterling, 1997; Wilson, 2003). Therefore, I will share my own experiences in language revitalization, my role as an adult learner, and finding my voice, Xəxʔmał. Our strength as Indigenous authors comes from our individual voices and our particular cultures. In Syilx methodology, Xəxʔmał's song reminds us to honour the voice of each individual as well as to recognize our role and responsibility in community.

Xəxʔmaɬ's Song

Within Syilx methodology and epistemology, every voice is unique and has value. As an individual, I feel a reluctance to begin speaking, yet I am emboldened by Xəxʔmaɬ's (Fly's) song. He reminds me of my responsibility within community and gives me courage to share my experiences in nsyilxcn revitalization, here in this paper and elsewhere.

Xəxʔmaɬ's story reminds us never to overlook the possible contribution of an individual. Though Xəxʔmaɬ was a small and insignificant being, his song contained the key to bringing Skmxist (Black Bear) back to life (the story is published in Marchand, 2004). Xəxʔmaɬ's courageous contribution revitalized Skmxist, the Chief of the tmixʷ (animal people), who also represents Elders and tradition. The story of Xəxʔmaɬ exemplifies emblematic Syilx values of generosity, personal responsibility, and individual self-sacrifice. Like Xəxʔmaɬ, and all of the tmixʷ, we each have our caʕʷt, our way, our roles and responsibilities within community. I believe Xəxʔmaɬ is an analogy of the role of the adult learner in nsyilxcn language revitalization. The sooner some of us take up our responsibility to use our voice to become advanced adult speakers, the sooner we can take up our place speaking with the Elders and teaching the next generations. This is Xəxʔmaɬ's principle: if we have a song, we are obligated to sing it.

And so, in contradiction to another valued Syilx principle of practicing quietness (Cardinal & Armstrong 1991, p. 90), I begin. I have one Syilx great-grandparent, Lucy Akat Sʔimlaʔxʷ (Simla), and 15 great-grandparents from various Western European countries, all of them having made their exodus to various corners of North America between four and eight generations ago. Being a small fraction Syilx and a large fraction English-speaking Euro-Canadian (suyápix), my approach to Indigenous methodology will reflect my own diasporic jumble of ancestry and experience. Speaking from within Syilx metaphor, I am one of the many strands of the multi-stranded web that makes up the Syilx people, land, and language, and that strand, although thin and stretched, was strong enough to call me home (Bill Cohen, personal communication, September 11, 2011). On the valued voice and uniqueness of the individual in academia and community, Dr. Bill Cohen, a Syilx writer, states, "all of us carry our belief systems into the classrooms … webs are created" (2001, p. 140). Our personal experiences become a potential source of strength in group discussion, decision making, or academia. Akiwenzie-damm states that, "through me, my ancestors speak" (1996, p. 1). I bring my experiences to this forum in the same way that Xəxʔmaɬ brought his: humbly and without expectation.

Nsyilxcn and Nqilxʷcn

We have two words for our language: nqilxʷcn and nsyilxcn (also spelled nsyilxcən and nsəlxcin[4]). Each can be used as a noun or a verb and are used interchangeably in conversation, but have a subtle relational difference.

Nsyilxcn refers to the language spoken by the Syilx people. The root of nsy-ilxcn is Syilx, together with a prefix and suffix denoting language. Nqilxʷcn has sqilxʷ, meaning *people* or *Indigenous people*, as its root, which is a very inclusive term. Nqilxʷcn therefore means *Indigenous language* and can be applied to any Indigenous language. Syilx and sqilxʷ are described further in the next section.

Nsyilxcn is one of seven Interior Salish languages in British Columbia, and occupies the part of the world today known as the Interior Plateau which straddles current-day southern British Columbia and northern Washington[5]. Nsyilxcn-speaking people are known by several names: Syilx, Sqilxʷ, Okanagan, Okanagan-Colville, Colville, Salish, and Interior Salish[6]. The Snʕayctx (Arrow Lakes or Sinixt) are also an nsyilxcn-speaking people. The language is profoundly important and its revitalization is a source of hope to our communities. We are in the groundbreaking stages of revitalization and time is of the essence. Bill Cohen provides an excellent overview of nsyilxcn revitalization efforts in his Doctor of Education (EdD) thesis (2010). There are less than 150 nsyilxcn speakers remaining who learned nsyilxcn as a first language out of a total population of approximately 5,000 Syilx people in Canada (Cohen, 2001; First Peoples' Heritage, Language & Culture Council, 2011). Most of these speakers are over 70 years old.

Of the 80 or more Indigenous languages spoken in Canada (Norris 2011, p. 113; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2011[7]), *all* are considered vulnerable or endangered based on their levels of intergenerational mother-tongue transmission (Norris 2011, p. 124). *None* of these languages are considered "safe" (Norris, 2011, p. 124). While languages are being lost at an alarming rate, many Indigenous communities are stepping up to remedy this and are writing their stories, in their own words. Indigenous authors are reclaiming their stance within language revitalization within their own communities (Billy, 2009; Cohen, 2001, 2010; Johnson, 2012; Kipp, 2007; Littlebear, 2007; Noori, 2009; Patterson, 2000; Smith, 2000b, 2005; Smith, 2000). Indigenous activists build upon each other's work. Many Indigenous-language immersion schools have been inspired and informed by other Indigenous-language immersion schools. Darrell Kipp writes that his visit to a Hawai'ian immersion school informed and motivated the creation of a Blackfoot immersion school in his community (Kipp, 2009). Bill Cohen (2010) likewise writes that his work is inspired and informed by Darrell Kipp, Graham Smith, and the Chief Atahm immersion school in Chase, BC (see Billy, 2009; Michel, 2005, 2011). As researchers, we build upon each other's research.

Bill Cohen has been an active language catalyst in his Syilx community, although he is careful to note that the Nkmaplqs nsyilxcn immersion school was accomplished by the community and not by his efforts alone (Cohen, 2010)[8]. In his 2010 Doctor of Education (EdD) thesis, he describes the Nkmaplqs immersion school for children which has now been success-

fully running for five years. The children have a large receptive vocabulary and have a somewhat smaller, though significant, productive vocabulary, and are certainly able to assert their identity as sqilxʷ people (Cohen, 2010, p. 289). Bill Cohen says of his contribution:

> I am one of the many foxes in the Okanagan gathering up the bits of skin, bone, and hair of coyote. When enough is gathered we can breathe on the assembled pile and Sinkleep, coyote, will awaken, yawn, and say, "Oh, I must have closed my eyes for a few minutes" and carry on as if he'd only had a brief nap. (Cohen, 2001, p. 140)

The Dream Way in a Spiral Way

Syilx is the word we use to refer to ourselves, as a person, political entity, community, or the territory. It is a powerful word that includes the person, the land itself, the territory, the language, and the culture. Syilx means stranded together like a many-stranded rope, a concept implying ecological and cultural stability, an interconnectedness of individual, family, land, and language. These strands were strained to the breaking point by colonization, displacement, and residential schools. (Armstrong & Hall, 2007)

In nsyilxcn, *people* are referred to as sqilxʷ, which means the tmixʷ with the power to dream, and to dream in a cyclical way. Tmixʷ are the animal people, including humans, interconnected with each other, their roles, and ways of being. The power to dream connects us, as sqilxʷ, to the land, to spirit, and to each other. The sqilxʷ way of being is sqəlxʷcawt, from the words sqilxʷ and caʕʷt. Caʕʷt (sounds like *shout*) means our role and responsibility as well as a way of being. Sqəlxʷcawt means simply the sqilxʷ way and, more poetically, *the dream way in a spiral way*, a concept that incorporates the cycle of life, of seasons, plants, tmixʷ, family, dream, and spirit (Cohen, 2001). According to Syilx Elders, now is the time when the dreams can be rebuilt by the current generations, before they are lost forever.

Bill Cohen has developed a sqəlxʷcawt (also sqilxwlcawt, sqilxʷcút) pedagogical model for nsyilxcn learning which places children at the centre of the pedagogical process, surrounded by community, extended family, nature, spirit, mastery, and a sense of belonging (2001, 2011). These children will grow up to become powerful community members. Cohen writes that public school programs do not work for Okanagan language because children are removed from the centre of sqəlxʷcawt (2001, p. 144). Sqəlxʷcawt (as described by Cohen, 2001) is similar to, and informed by, Te Kohanga Reo, the Māori language nest model where children are placed at the centre and by Kaupapa Māori, Māori language revitalization (Smith, 2000b).

How can adult nsyilxcn learners apply sqəlxʷcawt? As adult learners, we also need to place ourselves at the centre of the pedagogical structure rather than in boxes of learning. Just like younger learners, adult learners need to be supported by community, nature, extended family, spirit, and a sense of belonging. As adults, we have an added responsibility, or caʕʷt,

within community—to begin to speak up, to embrace successful plans and techniques for language acquisition, and to find our voices within community, classrooms, and in our homes.

Adult Indigenous Second Language Learning

Adult language learners have a critical role and responsibility in Indigenous language revitalization. While the children are the hope for the future, the parents are responsible for becoming advanced second-language speakers in the present and bringing the language back into the home. This is a daunting proposition, at best, for most adult learners and beginner speakers, although one with a great potential for spiritual and psychological satisfaction (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998). It is important for us to recognize that revitalizing a language as an adult is *not* a traditional activity, and we need to use all the second-language learning tools available[9]. It is our challenge, and our caʕʷt, to find ways to incorporate these in a community context. Some of these tools include utilizing the stages of second-language acquisition, and embracing teaching techniques and curriculum that fit these stages. Indigenous language teachers have discovered and are utilizing many second-language acquisition tools, and recognize the advantages of immersion, both for children and adults, of staying completely in the language during instruction rather than switching back and forth, focusing on comprehensible input, and following the natural language acquisition phases (Hinton, 2001, 2003; Supahan & Supahan, 2001; Kipp, 2007; Cohen, 2010).

Useful second-language acquisition techniques include total physical response (TPR), teaching proficiency through reading and storytelling (TPR-S), immersion, scaffolding, comprehensible input and output, and application of the phases of adult second-language acquisition (see Asher 1986; Cantoni, 1999; Krashen & Terrell, 1988; and Lightbown & Spada, 2006 for a description of these terms and their application). TPR-S is an interactive teaching method that has become popular with Indigenous language teachers (Cantoni, 1999, p. 53). TPR-S incorporates the best pedagogical concepts from TPR, lowering the affective filter, comprehensible input, scaffolding, and learning through action (Billy, 2009; Cantoni, 1999).

An important tool in successful adult language acquisition is lowering the affective filter (Asher, 1986), or what sqilxʷ people might call incorporating humour or fun. Activities and games are an integral part of language acquisition for children, adolescents, and adults (Krashen & Terrell, 1988, p. 46). Humour has an important role in Syilx pedagogy. There is nothing like a good belly laugh. This is the sqilxʷ way, the lighter side of deeper messages embedded in the captikʷł (stories). We know that the best way to learn is with a light heart. If you had been brought up in Syilx culture, you would clearly remember what happened when Snk'lip (Coyote)

momentarily forgot his own caʕʷt and tried to show off his flying abilities. The messy evidence of his "flight" can be seen streaking the rock cliffs in southern BC Syilx country. Humour is an important part of sqəlxʷcawt and will play a role in language learning, language revitalization, reconnection to the dream way, and to each other.

Learners as Teachers

The approaches we develop for the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages must reflect the reality of people who are in a state of language crisis and change, and must respond to ongoing forces of globalization and colonization. It is now necessary for beginner Indigenous second-language speakers to become teachers (Hinton, 2003; Kipp, 2009; Maracle, 2000, p. 135; Noori, 2009, p. 13; Parkin, 2011). Hinton refers to these courageous individuals as heroes (Hinton, 2003, p. 79). There are several advantages to learning-speakers as teachers, most importantly that they are generally younger and have more energy to spend with learners all day. They may also have teaching experience, skills in curriculum development, or other strengths. I can share that the experience of teaching adult immersion classes is powerful, enriching, and community-building, and that as an intermediate speaker (using excellent curriculum) I have brought students up to an intermediate level.

In the past, learners have been discouraged from teaching because only fluent Elders were considered qualified to teach. Beginner speakers must be encouraged to teach, using immersion-based curriculum designed for beginner teachers. This can lift the burden from the Elders of teaching beginners, saving the Elders' time and strength for teaching more advanced students. As we call upon learners to teach in our communities, instead of asking, as in the past, "Are you fluent?" we need to ask, "Do you know enough to teach?"

Stages of Nsyilxcn Acquisition

As adults, we acquire second languages in a certain, predictable order, mimicking the way languages are naturally acquired as children (Krashen & Terrell, 1988). Comprehension occurs long before speech production. Nsyilxcn has at least four words to describe stages of language acquisition that are identical for children and adults. The four words that I have identified (so far, and please accept that my learning is ongoing) are k'lpxʷína?, qʷl'qʷl'ti?st, n'ləqʷcin, and nt'łcin. The first of these words, k'lpxʷína?, refers to a time when the learner begins to comprehend the content of the language being spoken around her, and suddenly begins to get the gist of things. The word literally refers to holes being poked in the eardrums so that the meaning of the words can get into the mind. During this phase, the learner will not say much but will nod and be able to follow suggestions.

Qʷl'qʷl'ti?st refers to first speech, when a child or adult first begins to speak in simple, short utterances, with a lot of errors. Adults do not correct children's nsyilxcn errors; it is known that the speech will improve over time. The third stage, n'ɬəqʷcin, refers to when learners find their voice—they begin to be heard. N'ɬəqʷcin literally means starting to make a clear noise. There is a certain courage involved in this phase, especially for adult learners to overcome the fear of making mistakes and breaking the silence imposed by two generations of language loss. The fourth phase, nt'ɬcin, refers to the time when the speech becomes straightened out and errors become fewer. It literally means straight speech. Longer sentences are spoken and, gradually, grammatical errors begin to straighten themselves out. Nsyilxcn, to my knowledge, has no word for native-like proficiency, or to be "fluent"; we simply refer to speakers as speakers.

Krashen and Terrell (1988) theorize that language acquisition follows a predictable pattern with five distinct natural stages for both adults and children (described in Krashen & Terrell, 1988; and Krashen, Terrell, Ehrman, & Herzog, 1984). Their five phases are: (1) preproduction; (2) early production; (3) speech emergence; (4) intermediate; and (5) advanced. Comprehension occurs long before speech production and will include a silent phase and an early production phase consisting of very short utterances (Krashen & Terrell, 1988, p. 58). In stage three, speech emergence, the learner begins to speak in simple sentences. I believe nt'ɬcin to correspond to Krashen and Terrell's advanced level. They describe a sixth phase, native-like fluency, generally reserved for speakers who have been raised speaking the language (Krashen & Terrell, 1988).

Second-language acquisition theory cautions that adult learners will, with a lot of work, be able to achieve *advanced* levels, but will *not* achieve native-like proficiency (Rifkin, 2008, p. 582). This is a surprising fact; four years of university second-language instruction will typically not produce an advanced speaker; second-language learners generally cannot reach an advanced[10] level in university courses alone (Rifkin, 2008, p. 582). Most students will "stall" at the intermediate level unless immersion is provided and, even with immersion, two-thirds of students will not achieve advanced levels (Rifkin, 2008, p. 585, describing the American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL 1999) levels). This is why, as adult nsyilxcn language learners, immersion with Elders, and lots of it, is crucial; it is vital to apply ourselves towards the realistic goal of advanced speaker. Native-speaker, or native-like proficiency (or its vaguer cousin, *fluent*) will be a goal reserved for our children who will be brought up in the language. "Advanced fluency" is the vision statement of the nsyilxcn immersion school discussed in Bill Cohen's thesis (2010, p. 264).

Fluency is a sensitive term in Indigenous language community, often associated with Elders. I suggest *advanced* proficiency is a more easily definable term and a goal we should adopt, and I no longer use the term

fluent other than in general speech. The ability to get all your needs met and converse all day in the target language is an operational definition of fluency used by nsyilxcn activists Bill Cohen (2010) and Chris Parkin (2011). According to Chris Parkin, it takes about a year of concentrated effort to become fluent in nsyilxcn, or fluent enough to speak all day to your children (Parkin, 2011).

It is interesting to note that the small handful of advanced speakers that have emerged in recent years have all been self-taught, rather than learning in a classroom situation—all of them highly motivated individuals who worked closely with family and Elders in a Master-Apprentice type relationship (Cohen, 2010, p. 195). These advanced level or nt'łłcin speakers are an inspiration to other adult learners. These courageous individuals, including Chris Parkin and LaRae Wiley, have brought their skills forward into the community, developing immersion programs and curriculum.

Current Initiatives in Adult Nsyilxcn Learning

In our territory, there are hundreds of k'lpxʷína?, (comprehension phase, or roughly beginner speakers) nsyilxcn learners, including children and adults. Most Syilx communities have beginner courses in their band schools and high schools. There are adult beginner courses offered through the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, BC[11], and organized through the Paul Creek Language Association (TPCLA)[12]. However, we are faced with the same difficulty that many Indigenous language communities face: a shortage of fluent teachers, a surplus of adult learners who stall at the beginner phase, and, because of this, the inability to bring the language back into the homes (Hinton, 2003). Even though there have been ongoing nsyilxcn efforts by hardworking organizations with a small number of excellent fluent speakers, new approaches are needed, as 30 years of nsyilxcn language programming has created not one new fluent speaker (Cohen, 2010).

Being an adult nsyilxcn learner is a very individual role and Syilx culture is clear about the role and responsibility of the individual within community. Even the tiny Kwíkxʷəna (Mouse), another powerful, though small individual, can be of assistance to the much larger Kiʔláwna (Grizzly Bear), as mentioned in the opening quotation. In our present case, Grizzly Bear represents language and tradition which is caught in a sticky web of colonization, residential school effects, and global forces of language shift. As well, revitalization efforts are hampered by ongoing "politics of distraction" in the form of doubt, uncertainty, disagreement, bureaucracy, and "waiting for conditions to be right" (Cohen, 2010). Drawing from messages in the captíkʷł, each adult learner is acting like Kwíkxʷəna: gnawing through the numerous strands to ultimately free the nsyilxcn language and return it to the public domain.

The Paul Creek Language Association (TPCLA)

Chris Parkin, LaRae Wiley, and Sarah Peterson formed the Paul Creek Language Association (TPCLA), in Keremeos, BC in 2006. This team of three, with tireless and selfless commitment, a lot of heart, and very little funding, co-authored a full set of curriculum that brings the learner from beginner to advanced level with a year of intensive study (or two years of university courses, by my estimation). Sʕamtíc'aʔ, Sarah Peterson, is a dedicated, committed Elder who embraces new teaching methods and multimedia and has recorded thousands of words, sentences, verb conjugations, vocabulary items, and stories, all available in CD format in TPCLA curriculum. She works tirelessly, with resounding patience, humour, and optimism, and it has been an honour to learn from her, as well as from Chris and LaRae. TPCLA (together with the Centre for Interior Salish, which they formed in 2009 in Spokane, WA) have organized beginner and intermediate adult classes and started an immersion school in Spokane for pre-kindergarten to Grade two children. TCPLA has developed interactive learning software for each level, as well as numerous curricula for children and youth, including math, science, and an interactive video fantasy game that uses intermediate and advanced language. For the past four years, CIS has organized the Salish Language Conference in Spokane, an event that attracted more than 500 Salish participants in 2012, and included the first-ever Salish language karaoke contest, to the delight of the Elders in the audience (Taylor, 2011).

We are very lucky as nsyilxcn learners to have a comprehensive set of TPCLA curriculum. TPCLA textbooks[13] incorporate cutting-edge language acquisition techniques such as total physical response (TPR), TPR-Storytelling, repetition, immersion, games, visuals, and stages of learning. *Nsəlxcin 1* gives students a 500-word receptive and productive vocabulary. Three of the six textbooks are based on captíkʷɬ (story), placing the language in a cultural context. Each book requires between 90-150 classroom hours to complete, usually accomplished in a three- to four-week intensive course, or ongoing evening classes. The entire curriculum takes approximately 1,000 classroom hours, or roughly the equivalent of two full years of university instruction. Once learners have completed the first four (of the six) TCPLA textbooks, they will be intermediate speakers and able to converse all day with Elders.

TCPLA curriculum is unique in that it is specifically designed to be taught by beginner and intermediate speakers. As the learners teach, they also learn. Having good curriculum and intermediate-speaker teachers can "lift the burden from our Elders", empowering beginner and intermediate speakers to teach each other (Parkin, 2011). Several small groups of adults in many of our Syilx communities have completed the first one to three books through various intensive programs. The fourth book (*Captíkʷɬ 2*) was taught for the first time to a small group (including me and others from the Chopaka immersion house) in July 2012, in Inchalium, WA.

Chopaka Immersion House

kʷu_kcil'cl'kst i?_smam?ím kʷu_kʷliwt kl'_c'up'áq' i?_l'_n'qilxʷcn i?_citxʷtət.
Five of us, all women, lived together in the Chopaka nsyilxcn immersion house.
i?_skʷskʷistət S?ímlaʔxʷ, Prasát, C'ərtups, Xʷənam'xʷnm, naʔł Staʔqʷálqs.

Our names are Michele K. Johnson (snpintktn, Penticton), Shelly Boyd
(Snʕayctx, Arrow Lakes), Carmella Alexis (nk'maplqs, Vernon), Brandy
Baptiste (Keremeos), and Hailey Causton (Westbank)[14]. This section intro-
duces our work in the Chopaka immersion house and our commitment to
become new advanced speakers.

After a year of studying nsyilxcn, both through the En'owkin Centre
and first-year TPCLA classes, we made the commitment to co-create an
immersion house and bring daily nsyilxcn back into our lives. Five of us
moved into a house on a remote part of the reserve, practically touching
the Canada-US border. We worked, studied, and lived together four days
a week, for five months between January and May 2011. We each com-
muted between one and four hours from our various corners of Syilx
territory in order to live together. We call each other capsíw's—a kinship
term for sisters. We had strict immersion between 11:00 am and 7:00 pm.
Sarah Peterson visited us for one to two hours each day, drinking tea, chat-
ting, or sometimes working on traditional activities. We are the first group
of adult learners to bring nsyilxcn back into everyday use, even at our lim-
ited level. I can't even begin to describe the feeling of switching to nsyilxcn
on the first day as shy beginner speakers. It was somewhere between fear,
awkwardness, excitement, and pride—pride that we have created a place
where nsyilxcn is spoken eight hours a day. This, in itself, is a remarkable
achievement. I filmed some of our emerging conversations which I
describe in my dissertation and article (Johnson, manuscript accepted)[15].

In my cohort, TPCLA provides the foundation and materials for our
road to proficiency. We are unique in that we do not have a teacher and are
working through the curriculum as a group. As we raise our language pro-
ficiency, we are creating a sqəlxʷcawt for adult nsyilxcn learning. It is not
an easy road but we hope it will be one that others can follow. Our learning
model rests upon the solid foundations of excellent language pedagogy,
immersion with Elders, and immersion amongst ourselves, all of which are
incorporated within TPCLA curriculum.

We spent five hour hours a day, four days a week, working through
TPCLA second-year curriculum as well as reviewing first-year curriculum,
and part of the day in chores and conversation (all in nsyilxcn). We got
headaches when our brains were full. In the evenings after 7:00 pm we
allowed ourselves English conversation. Before moving into the house we
were barely qʷl'qʷl'tiʔst, making our first sounds. After five months in the
house we emerged n'łəqʷcin (clear voice, or starting to be heard) and were
speaking like precocious four-year olds. We were now able to converse at a
low-intermediate level (as defined in Miller, 2004; ACTFL, 1999) and able

to teach others. Some of us, including me, have courageously progressed from beginner learner to teacher and have the honour of starting new learners on the path to language proficiency. It is a scary thing to stand up and teach but, like Xəx?mał, ours is a song that we have a responsibility to sing[16].

We continue to study and teach TPCLA curriculum as of this writing in October 2012 although we no longer live together. We continue to develop our sqəlxʷcawt as adult learners and continue to support the creation of language learner communities in our several Syilx communities. Through our efforts, we hope to prove to the Syilx Nation that advanced-level learning is possible as adults and to discount the belief that nsyilxcn is so difficult that it takes a lifetime to learn.

Recommendations for the Future

Communities must build and support cohorts of adult learners to move beyond beginner levels—to build their courage to move beyond k'lpxʷína?. Gather your materials together and gather your people, and then get to work. As learners, we need to embrace cutting-edge second-language acquisition techniques and incorporate them into our curriculum. Learning a second language as an adult requires a time commitment, the equivalent of a full-time job for approximately two years. Once you have created a language cohort, learners will need a full year of beginner to intermediate lessons with curriculum to become n'łəqʷcin. Once they are n'łəqʷcin they can begin to divide their time between more advanced curriculum, time with Elders, and time speaking and teaching language in community. This will create nt'łcin (straightened speech, or approximately advanced-level) adult speakers in two years.

Once we have a growing population of nt'łcin speakers and children on their road to fluency, we will need literature, media, television, creative writing, film, and radio (Anonby, 1999; Brand, 2002; Noori, 2009). Māori language revitalizers find it critical to create adult literature for adults to keep up to the learning rates of the children (Benton & Benton, 2001, p. 432). We have excellent nsyilxcn curriculum and traditional stories, a dictionary (Mattina, 1986), and several stories collected by linguists (Mattina, 1985; Mattina & deSautel, 2002), but we now need children's books, youth and adult literature, films, plays, fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.

We also need to support the creation of beginner, intermediate, and advanced nsyilxcn courses in university. Margaret Noori's (2009) accounts of Anishinaabemowin university classes are inspiring; the University of Michigan hosts classes of 250 students and weekly language tables. My dream is to develop post-secondary and graduate-level curriculum and enable students to pursue their undergraduate and graduate degrees *in* nsyilxcn. My dream is to teach courses that move beyond language teaching, to teaching in the language about topics that are important to us, such as the salmon life cycles, plant knowledges, kinship patterns, art, history, geography, and land-

scape studies. At the same time, we need a vibrant community of speakers outside of university contexts—I envision intellectual kitchen table discussions in nsyilxcn, such as the ones in Yiddish that Joshua Fishman grew up with (Fishman, Hornberger, & Pütz, 2006). This is something to aim for.

The Chopaka immersion house was a pilot project and the eyes of the community were upon us, hoping for our success and continued commitment. We are the first nsyilxcn adult immersion house but we sincerely hope we will not be the last. We also hope that, like Jessie Fountain of Kalispel, some nsyilxcn learners will choose to speak only nsyilxcn to their children (see Taylor, 2011) and that these polyglot children will grow up speaking their neighbouring languages with each other.

Conclusions

A small number of committed individuals can make a big difference. Do not be afraid to revitalize your language. The language needs the courage and motivation of individual people like you, and me, and our families. This is work that needs to be done. As learners, we have many tools we can use. In the sqəlxwcawt model, the hard work of our language studies is placed within a supportive network of community, family, and Elders. Our language pedagogy rests upon the three-tiered foundation of intensive curricular study, immersion with Elders, and immersion with other adult learners. Our approach is simple and I recommend it to you: we *show up* and kʷu_sqʷaʔqʷaʔálx. We begin to speak.

Becoming nt'ɬcin is my personal choice. I would like to point out that while this is my caʕʷt, it is not a responsibility I place on other people. No pressure. As Darrell Kipp reminds us, stick with your strengths and find a few committed individuals to work with. Nqilxʷcn revitalization is part of our sqəlxʷcawt but it is not easy work. The process of learning and teaching nsyilxcn has so far led me to experiences that have been challenging, stressful, inspiring, transformational, and to a sense of true community. In the face of great odds, we choose optimism. I conclude by quoting Darrell Kipp, cofounder of the Blackfeet immersion school in Montana:

You do not ask permission to use your language, to work with it, to revitalize it. You do not ask permission. You don't go to the school board and ask for fifteen minutes to plead your case. You don't change the entire community. You save your strength; you find the ones who want it. You look for the young couples; you work with the people who want you to work with them. You hone your skills, talent, and time. And these are precious. Take care of yourselves. (Kipp, 2000, p. 6)

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Glossary of Nsyilxcn Terms

capʔsiw's: sisters, plural, kinship term

captikʷł: Syilx stories from ancient times (also spelled chapteekwl)

caʕʷt:	way of being, role, responsibility, action, the thing one *does*
k'ək'ni?:	kokanee salmon, a well-known nsyilxcn borrowed word
k'lpxʷína?:	holes cut in the ears; the first stage of nsyilxcn acquisition when a person begins to comprehend language
Kʷíkxʷəna:	Mouse: a small individual who helped Grizzly Bear in captíkʷł
kʷu‿sqʷa?qʷa?álx:	We begin to (are going to) speak
limlmt p‿cyʕáp:	thank you for arriving, plural
n'ləqʷcin:	starting to be heard/make a noise, become more clear voiced; from łiqʷ, plain to see; the third stage of nsyilxcn acquisition
nsyilxcn:	the language spoken by Syilx and Sn?ayctx people; also spelled nsyilxcən, nsəlxcin, nsyilxcen, and nqilxʷcn
nt'łcin:	straightened speech, when the speech contains fewer errors
ńđəy̓us k̓ʷłpaʕx̌mín:	two minded, a condition that results from speaking one way while believing another
nqilxʷcn:	Indigenous language (the language of sqilxʷ, the people)
nqəlqilxʷcn:	Indigenous languages, plural
Snk'lip:	Coyote: pivotal heroic and comedic figure in captikʷł
qʷl'qʷl'ti?st:	first speech, short utterances, similar to a child's speech; the second stage of nsyilxcn acquisition when words are formed
Skmxist:	Black Bear: pivotal figure in captikʷł; represents tradition
sqilxʷ:	person; Indigenous person; literally the animal being (tmixʷ) with the power to dream in a cyclical way
sqəlxʷcawt:	sqilxʷ + caʕʷt,way of being; also Bill Cohen's pedagogical model; also spelled sqilxʷcút
suyápix:	English speaking or British person
Syilx:	stranded together like a rope; nsyilxcn speaking person; refers to Okanagan and Okanagan-Colville people and territory
X̌əx̌?mał:	Fly; represents individual voice

Notes

[1] Nsyilxcn orthography utilizes the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Spoken pronunciations can be found at www.okanaganfirstpeoples.ca/lessons.cfm and at www.interiorsalish.com. To learn nsyilxcn and read about nsyilxcn revitalization efforts, see www.interiorsalish.com.

[2] I invite the interested reader to contact me for my personal story and to explore other writers who have articulated the topic of insider/outsider research, the role of the individual in research (Abu-Lughod, 2006; Archibald, 2008; Smith, 2000), and the effects of mixed race in community (Jack, 2010, p. 22).

[3] Nsyilxcn words are defined in the glossary at the end of this paper. In our communities, there is much discussion on these two particular terms, as well as their root words, Syilx and sqilxʷ. I use them more or less interchangeably, thereby introducing the reader to the multiplicity of terms and meanings in nsyilxcn. The differences between the terms can best be discussed in nsyilxcn.

[4] These spellings reflect dialectical differences. Nsyilxcən/nsyilxcn are from the northern part of Syilx territory, north of the Canada-US border. Below the Canada-US border, our language is spelled and pronounced nsəlxcin.

[5] First People's Language Map of Syilx territory: www.maps.fphlcc.ca/fphlcc/nsyilxcen

[6] We were previously known by neighbouring nations as the Salmon People because of immense sockeye and spring salmon fisheries on the Columbia and Okanagan rivers (Skyáka?, personal communication, July 2011). A brief note about salmon is relevant here—everything is connected. k'ək'ni? (kokanee salmon, a land-locked cousin to sockeye) survived with us through colonization and ecosystem disruption, and has become an nsyilxcn borrow-word known around the world. In 2011, 100,000 sockeye salmon (with assistance from Okanagan Nation Alliance Fisheries and Syilx prayers and drumming) returned to spawn in the Okanagan River, a small step towards their previous millions. Nsyilxcn's return, like the sockeye, is assisted by our prayers, hard work, and cutting-edge technology.

[7] UNESCO (2011) lists 88 Indigenous languages in Canada; Norris (2011) lists 86.

[8] The school's full name is Nkmaplqs i Snmamayatn kl Sqilxwtet (Cohen, 2010).

[9] Indigenous Second Language Learning (ISLL) is a new academic field that emerges from community, action research, linguistics, education, political science, sociology, and psychology, and recognizes "the uniqueness of second-language learning in Indigenous contexts due to the colonial dynamic" (McIvor 2012, p. 41).

[10] When I speak of beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, I am blending Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB, 2006) with ACTFL (1999) and Miller's (2004) (very similar) benchmark definitions. The nine benchmarks I use are low-, mid-, and high-beginner; low-, mid-, and high-intermediate; and low-, mid-, and high-advanced. I recommend Indigenous language learners follow benchmarks similar to CLB (Pawlikowksa-Smith, 2000; CLB, 2006) and Miller (2004). I discuss benchmarks further in Johnson (in press).

[11] For adult beginner courses offered at the En'owkin Centre, see www.enowkincentre.ca

[12] To see a listing of available adult beginner and intermediate TPCLA courses, to download Nsyilxcn 1, play interactive nsyilxcn games, view instructional videos, and listen to songs, see www.interiorsalish.com and www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/1919

[13] TPCLA First-year textbooks, Nsəlxcin 1 and Captíkʷł 1, are Peterson, Wiley & Parkin (2006a) and (2005a), respectively. Second-year textbooks, Nsəlxcin 2 and Captíkʷł 2, are Peterson et al. (2006b) and (2005b), respectively. Third-year textbooks, Nsəlxcin 3 and Captíkʷł 3, are in press. The direct acquisition teaching manual is Peterson and Parkin (2007).The curriculum and its efficacy is described further in Johnson (in press).

[14] We were proud to present our experiences as a group to the Celebrating Salish Conference in Spokane, WA, in March 2011 (Johnson, Boyd, Alexis, Baptiste, & Causton, 2011).

[15] We documented our progress in three short films in nqilxʷcn on YouTube™ (also posted to Endangered Languages website at www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/1919):

1. *Goldilocks I: Chopaka Immersion House*: http://youtu.be/KVj3vpCf6JE
2. *Goldilocks II: Chopaka Immersion House:* http://youtu.be/3DxQb_Lr1rw
3. *kʷu_n'ləqʷcin (we speak clearly):* Chopaka Immersion House: http://youtu.be/O7fFMN-KSa4

[16] In the house we were transformed on many levels—language, personal, and community—akin to transformation in the Grizzly's Den, which I discuss in Johnson (in press). I conclude that committing two years to the Grizzly's Den of intensive lesson-based study with groups of other adult learners is key to language revitalization, and that TPCLA curriculum provides a successful model and tools for our transformation into groups of nt'łcin speakers.

[17] Information for related webpages is provided as follows:

1. Spoken nsyilxcn can be heard at: www.okanaganfirstpeoples.ca/lessons.cfm
2. First Peoples nsyilxcn Language Map of BC: www.maps.fphlcc.ca/fphlcc/nsyilxcen
3. En'owkin Centre nsyilxcn courses: www.enowkincentre.ca/
4. Paul Creek Language Association (course listings, free *Nsyilxcn 1* textbook download, audio, online interactive games from *Nsyilxcn 1* and *Captik^{wł} 1*, nsyilxcn videos and songs, and link to Centre for Interior Salish): www.interiorsalish.com

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