

Salish Language Educator Development (SLED)

Melanie Sandoval

Milani ɬu isk^west, tɬ sčilip u čisqelix^w, u čn sx^wmiməyem ɬ sk^wtisnac̣ɬqeymi ɬ x^weyilqsalq^w u tɬ ci? iqs yoʔnunm ɬu seliš nuwewlštn u aɬlasq̣t qeqs yoʔnunm ɬu qes ṃiməyem ɬu qe nuwewlštn. (Milani is my name, I am from Dixon, MT, I am a teacher at the college in Pablo, I continue to learn the Salish language and always we are learning to teach our language).

So before we start-- well, I am starting, sorry. And if you guys wanna laugh, everybody finds my presentations funny, even though I don't mean it to be funny sometimes. So I'm not gonna take offense if you laugh.

So here is a map of some of the place names. Sɬɬulix^w seliš u qɬispe. And these are from elders' recordings. As you could see, we're right kind of in the middle, right here in Missoula, and then just north there is what we call the Flathead Reservation. And that's a misnomer. There are three tribes on the Flathead Reservation, the Salish, we also say Bitterroot Salish. And the Qɬispe, also the Kalispell, Upper Kalispell, and used to be known as the Pend d'Oreilles. There is one other language on our reservation, the Kootenai language. And that's a language isolate here and not related but we do have that on our reservation. And so the blue area is places where we have many place names.

And if you see below here, there's a highlighted area, and that was written into one treaty that was never honored as a part of our reservation. And just to highlight that, everybody has treaties that we go by, and I just wanted to have that up there. I didn't make this map, but we have people who are compiling these and making it a huge project to rename places in Montana or just recognize places that have names and historical significance to our people. And I know other tribes have done it, I've seen some people from other tribes do that, and I just think that's really important.

And so I would like to recognize also that a lot of our work is founded on those ɬu qe x^wɬčmusšn, our ancestors, the people who came before us. We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them. And we wouldn't be here if they didn't fight for us to be here. Fight for our language, and fight for our land rights, and fight for everything. And so I always remind our students, but I always like to think about that. Like yesterday, I talked about Patlik, and here he is in the classroom at school, and for many years, he just worked, worked, worked. And he always kind of joked, and he would say, "I'm not going to be done with work until--" How did he say it? "You'll have to carry me out of this building." And he worked up until about two weeks before he passed, just tirelessly writing, translating, recording, we recorded him. So I just wanna recognize he's one of them, but there are many elders who have helped us get to where we are.

And on the right side is what we call the Round. and we decided pretty early that a lot of what we do is based on the four seasons. And we brainstormed a lot of things that happen. So our curriculum in many of our departments and institutions are based on these, the cultural ways and the activities

and beliefs around our four seasons. And so it's kind of like a spiral curriculum. It spirals, and you start off with the little ones, and it just keeps going. So every year we do all of these things, and we try to do more every year.

Also, just really quick, the four logos down here are four of the departments or institutions that that I have been a part of, but also who do a lot of this work. So somebody asked me earlier about how many people do we have? It's hard to say when we have some here and some here and some there.

Oh, just to remind people, I know there's a lot of people who may dispute the first time you might be here or have visited here, this Flathead Reservation, we have, combined with Kootenai and Salish and Qlispe, around 8,000 tribal members. I'm not sure in the percentage that lives off the reservation, but we do have a lot of descendants, but because of the Homesteading Act, we are actually a minority in our own reservation. If you've been to the Flathead Reservation, you'll see a lot of ranching and businesses. And so we're not like the, well, yeah, we're kind of the minority.

Okay, back to the slide. The Salish Qlispe Cultural Committee it was created in 1974 from a grant that the tribal high school had got and they wanted to do something around culture. And so a lot of these elders were just called in and they're like, what do we do now? What do we do? What are we gonna do for our language and our people? And somebody had the amazing foresight to bring a tape recorder. And that type of tape recorder sat in the middle of the table many times. We listened to some of these recordings, and you hear kids running around in the background. You can hear people opening doors. And it wasn't that high quality. But one of our elders who's not on here on this picture, he told so many stories, but he was alive for I think four months in 1974. And we got so much of our cultural knowledge And I mean, we got it from a lot of people, but just thinking about the references to him as a resource. And it's just amazing to me that if somebody hadn't recorded that, place names, medicines, history, perspective from our elders, if they hadn't recorded that, like I can't even imagine what it would be like now, what we wouldn't have. And I know that there's gaps still in what we need, but I just think it's amazing.

So this is a lot of our elders back in 1975. Oh, I'm going to go back really quick before I go to that.

So another thing about our reservation is that, and like many reservations, we've lost many speakers. Every time we lose elders, we lose speakers and the cultural knowledge that they have. And so when I was getting done with my Bachelor's, and started working at a public school, we had probably about 80 speakers who were first language speakers. And then every year, and they're all elders, and so every year we would lose like ten, five, like it's really hard when you're doing language, you just, loss of elders is just part of your work. And so we decided because of the because of the success of the Maori and the Hawaiians, to create a school. And so I quit my job and started working here at the Salish Language School. And we had like four students the first year. And then every year we've grown. And we are in our 21st year now.

So I talked about this yesterday, Nk^wusm means one fire, one family. And I just have another story. Before we started, we went up to Kotzebue, Alaska. We were visiting their immersion school. And one thing that their leader, I don't know if he's like a chairman or the chief, we had asked them, "Would you have any words of wisdom for us?" And he said, "Yes, go home and start." He said, "If you plan it for 20 years, you'll still make mistakes. If you go home right now and start your school, you'll still make mistakes, but at least you'll have started your school."

And so we did just that. We came home and found a building which was recently abandoned by the Head Start and they left us their old toys and we just started. We didn't even ask the tribe. We just said, "Hey, we're gonna start a school. If you support us, great. But if you don't, we'll figure out how to do it." And we are actually lucky that that they said they can support us and they have continued to support us.

One thing that's unique about our tribe and our reservation, like I said, is not only, we have three languages, but we also have seven school districts. So that means, you know, Class B, Class C, they're pretty sizable schools. And so to think about, oh, we also have for Head Start, we have I think 34 classrooms. This all leads to our need for cultural specialists, for language teachers. We thought, you know, we need them in the schools.

So that kind of goes along with the Nk^wusm, you know, we also need an Nk^wusm school as well. So as we were, this is in 2010 or so, actually, I think it's a little bit later. As we were teaching our youth, we kept getting more and more. We started realizing we need more teachers. We need more people, adults, to be in the classroom and learning. And so my coworker, Chaney Bell, happened to go over to Washington and see this program there. And it was an adult program. And I can give you the website and information because a lot more tribes are using this template, this model, but we started the adult language program where we know that not everybody's gonna become a teacher, but we're hoping that they will because one thing I truly believe is that we are creating a language community. Every one of these people in here has kids. They're reaching out, teaching those kids. They're reaching out to schools. They're creating this community where we can have conversations and we can have ceremonies, and we can do what a community would do.

So I will talk about the curriculum, but I just wanted to mention the program. Okay, so I put this slide in here because sometimes even our students are confused about where they belong and like what hat they're wearing. And so The Salish Qlispe Culture Committee has a program for language apprentices. They are hired under contract to work eight hour days, almost 365 days a year, but we get federal holidays off. And so their job is to learn the language. We do it a little bit differently than the Kootenai language apprentices. They hire theirs for, I think, a five year contract. And we hire ours for one year, maybe two years if they're outstanding. But so we were lucky, we're in our fifth cohort, so I'm trying to do the math, 2018. We were lucky to have coincided with an A&A grant that the Salish Kootenai College received for starting a Salish Language Educator Development program. And as you can see, you can be a language apprentice and you could be in SLED, or you could just be only one.

But then we also incorporated the CALS, which is the Culture and Language Studies, which Linda and Tim talked about yesterday. And so if you don't wanna be an educator and take all the education classes, you can also do CALS, and they learn some really awesome things in there. Like they make rope from dogbane, and they make hooks from pinching wood and thorns, and they make fire starters. and they've been asked to go into our schools and present. And so we have a few options that people can go towards or if they just want to be language apprentices.

So I'm not gonna read all of that, but Chris Parkin, if you look on the internet, it's called interiorsalish.com, that's his website. But we use his template. And one thing that he tells us is that there are many methods of teaching the language. And I'm sure a lot of you guys know those, but he said that we need a fluency transfer system. And that's what he calls this. And a lot of methods are incorporated right into our teaching of this. And he's free with this if you guys wanna look it up or have any questions about it or wanna start it with your language. He's very open to people using that.

So what you see here is Level One. There's a workbook, we go through vocabulary, then they do a story, and they're so, it kind of progresses, you can see the little yellow arrows. And they go through many, many words. I just recently was putting these in a database, and I think it's over 6,000 vocabulary words. That doesn't include like conjugations and other things that go along with it. I'll go into it a little bit more, but every workbook has a CD or audio. We have pictures, we tried to have artists contributing and have pictures. We had a tutor, but it's since been outdated, but we do have an app. And so we've been trying to keep up with that. So you can download the app on your phone or your tablet. The workbook, and our students do written tests and oral tests every so many lessons and so many stories. And if you wanted to know more about that, I know that you know I can't put it all in one slide, but I will.

Oh, I had this for a different presentation, but our early childhood services, we also got a grant an A&A Grant to start an immersion / Head Start. Language-ness, and I thought it was really neat, the workshop we had yesterday, brainstorming all the things that we would use in the classroom. Because we did pretty much that when we developed our curriculum for that age group. And we just put everything on the board, on the walls, and we're just brainstorming like, "Hi, when do we need to change diapers? What phrases, which language? What can we use for that? What can we use for eating at the table?" Which that was a lot of vocab. And we just, how do we go outside? How do we, you know, I'm just trying to think of all the things that we brainstormed, but it was very similar to that activity that we did yesterday.

Okay, so back to our Intensive Language Programs. So this is the first book, and like I said, they spent all day, much an eight hour a day. We tried to put their own study time into it. So they get breaks, and they can review with each other, and they do homework. But we kind of broke it down, and we wanted them to have songs, and we tried to incorporate as many things to their day as we can. So this is an example of one lesson in the first book. And we call it an Intensive Adult Language Program, because it is intense. You learn, At first you're learning maybe 10 vocab a

lesson. But that's like 40 vocab a day, and we don't slow down. Every book we go through, we're learning 20 to 40. I think one story we're just doing this week, there's like 60 vocabulary words. And so we tell them it's intense. It's just like, we're just throwing it at you. We're just trying to-- But we do a lot of, like I said, activities that hold up the picture, and point to the picture, say this. And we try to, on the very bottom it says, recognition, comprehension, limited production production, try to follow that in every lesson that we do.

And you know, every teacher is different. Every teacher is gonna do it in a little bit different way and bring things out. Which is, I think the beauty of this curriculum is that you can hand it off to a second language learner, and then they can utilize this in their classrooms. Which is very nice, I think. And so part of that is, the first book was the vocabulary and phrases, but then we want them to also learn stories and how sentences flow and work. And so the second book in every level is a story.

One challenge we had is that one of our sister tribes used their creation stories, and on the Salish and Qlispe, on the Flathead Reservation, they encourage us not to tell those during the winter. So we had to come up with some new stories to tell. And we kind of, we wanted to follow that same season structure and also things that pertain to us. And so that was one thing that was a challenge, is for us to adapt it to our dialect and to come up with new stories, but we did it.

So here's kind of an example. You can see at this point, they're still getting English and Salish, and we go through many activities so that they're getting it in their mind and they're memorizing. So I like to think of the curriculum as, like when you're young and you're first acquiring your language, as a baby, you comprehend way more than you are putting out. Like you tell a kid, "Here, go throw this in the garbage," or, "Well, you need to go do this," and a lot of times we'll just go do it. And you're like, "Oh, they understand what I'm saying," but it's a lot harder for them to spit it out.

And so I relate that to, being an adult, how do we get it out? And we try to create those situations where they're not only hearing it, but they're also saying it and using it. And I always think about this, this is how I think about it, is the first second, people always say, "Oh, I'm a baby in my language," but the first, second, third stories are just like that. By the time you get through our curriculum, you're ready to go to kindergarten, and now you're ready to go out and do a lot of those cultural activities. We like to incorporate them, but I feel like we only have them for a short period of time, and we really want our students to go out and do something in the community. So we're just throwing language at them and getting them through.

So what we noticed, and this is our reservation here, Nk^wusm's down there, and the Culture Committee is up there, the College is up there. And what we noticed though, is that like a lot of tribes, you might have people who speak, but they don't have classroom knowledge, lessons, units, classroom management, those types of things. And then you might have teachers, and that was where I came in, who didn't have the language. And so what we wanted to do was, every classroom has a speaker and a certified teacher, and try to put them together so that they can come up with

good ways for the kids to learn. But the more we lost elders, that's hard for us to do. So we needed our teachers to have the language and education experience and knowledge.

So these couple of ladies here came up with the idea to have this grant. So we created the Salish Language Educator Development Program. And so one of the main challenges with this was being able to say, how many hours does this lesson take? How much work are they putting into it? How many credit hours does this figure into? So you have to do that administrative side of it, trying to figure out how do we justify this? How do we get this passed through? And luckily we have people who can help us do that on the curriculum committees of the college or who knows some smart things.

So this is kind of what it looks like, so the first column over on that side, you can just get an Intensive Salish Language Certificate of Completion. So after one year, go through as much as you can, you can get your Certificate of Completion. And I believe a lot of colleges do that, where you can do, I'm not sure which, I'm just randomly thinking, like Heavy Equipment or Carpentry or something, you can get a Certificate of Completion. But we have that in our language, so. But if they wanna get their Associate's Degree, it actually takes them three years, not two. And you have to take your General Education courses, and your other like the pedagogy and immersion labs and all this good stuff. And then here's just an example of some of the classes that they are having to take for that degree, for just an Associate.

So we realized after the first or second cohort that-- What we realized is that our students are putting in so much time, they get so many credits that we should do this as a Bachelor's degree. So that's what we did is we turned it into a Bachelor's degree. So you do the same amount of Salish language work, but you're doing all the things that you would do like the practica and the well, I'm thinking, I don't know, the teacher stuff. I can't think of it at the moment. So, and last year we graduated our first three Bachelors in Salish Language Educator Development. And this year we have three more. And so, yeah, that's awesome.

I tell my language students, because language is hard, You guys all know it takes a lot of brain work, a lot of-- A lot of my students will go home after a day just tired. And they said, we didn't even do any physical work. but we're just so tired. Your brain is so tired. But they're not only doing that. A lot of them are going in the evenings and taking classes and they're sometimes taking weekend classes, and I actually have to teach sometimes on the weekends as well. And a lot of them, like two of the girls, sorry, ladies that are graduating have five kids a piece. And so they're dedicated, you know? I am just so proud of these students that they're just doing so much. And I always tell them too, not only do we have to do this, we get to do this. But also I wish I had this 30 years ago when we were starting out. I totally wish that this was in place. And so this is, yeah, that's what the Bachelor's looks like.

So, and here's a few of the partners that we work with, if you guys wanna ask any questions to them. And last slide, I think I'm early now. I'm really early. I talked faster than I thought. Tim showed this slide yesterday. And I feel like, and he didn't really go into it, but what I feel like is

that we, when I worked for Head Start, when I worked for Nkwusm, when I worked for the college, it's like we're always doing trauma-related trainings because that's just a part of our community as well. How to deal with trauma, how to recognize trauma. And we always hear about historical trauma and the things that has happened to our people.

When I look at this, I think about that, because every year we dig bitterroot. That's one of our stories of our people. We have those same stories that, you know, why things came to be. And bitterroot is a significant medicinal plant and food plant for our people. But Tim had dug this root. And usually right away you're supposed to peel it, and other things, and dry it. But he didn't do that, and he brought it to his office and kind of forgot about it, as he said. But, and I don't know how long they forgot about it. Well, when they came back from wherever they were, they came back and here it had bloomed, this bitterroot. And so for me, it symbolizes that resiliency. Like you could take us out of the earth, you could take us out of the dirt, and put us on a shelf. But we're still gonna bloom. We're still resilient. We're still gonna be here. And I like to tie that back to our elders because our elders were the ones like I said, who fought for us to be here.

And so I always tell my students, right now I have adult students and I tell them, You know, one of these days you're gonna be the-- and Patlik told us this -- one of these days you're gonna be the one to have to go to the capitoland tell them why it's important that we have our water rights or our land rights. or to carry on our ceremonies or something. And how are we gonna do that if we don't have the language to say it in? We can still do it, but having the language as your worldview and knowing what it really means when you're saying it, I always like to say like, there's really a lot of integrity in our meanings because we were talking about root words and suffixes and prefixes.

And once you start learning more of that, I feel like you're changing the way you view the world. Like you're changing from that. Like I said yesterday, that English mindset into how would our elders have said this? How did they see the world? And when you learned those words, it's like, well, like the presentation, you build that understanding, and a lot of it changes. And so I like to point this out is that, we're still here, we're resilient, we're growing strong, and we're just gonna keep on doing what we're doing.