

I,ÍYMET TFE SKÁL ŁTE (Our language is beautiful)

In preparing to share the collective voices of this Special Issue journal, we begin by grounding ourselves in one of the languages of the homelands on which the University of Victoria sits, where the journal is housed on this day.

HIWESTES ÇNES TELEKTES TE NE SKÁLS E TIÁ ÁNEÇ. JI,IJEŁ SEN ÇNES ČA,I E TFE
XAXE SČA ŁTE.

I am honoured to share some words and grateful that I am able to do such sacred work.

SXEDTELISIYE TE NE SNÁ Č,SE LÁ,E ET WSÁNEĆ. MEQ TE NE ŠWELOKE Č,SE LÁ,E
WSÁNEĆ. KÁYES OL I,TOTELNEW NE SKÁL. TES TE NE LOT NENE, FILEĆ SEN LE NE
SOŁ. TIME,SET SEN ÇS I,TOTLENEW SENÇOFEN.

My WENITEM,KEN SNÁ is Renee J-Sampson. My family comes from the WSÁNEĆ territory specifically BOKEĆEN and WJOŁEŁP. I have been a language learner since my eldest daughter was born in 2004. This is where I began my language journey. I started my journey for my children. My mother calls herself the lost generation, she speaks often of how the residential school, which all grandparents of mine attended, interfered tremendously with the passing on of language and culture. I grew up with this feeling of loss but was not able to articulate it until I was older.

I started working as a SENÇOFEN apprentice in 2009 at the WSÁNEĆ School Board. I was the first teacher at the LE,NONET SCUL,ÁUTW SENÇOFEN survival immersion school. I later became the SENÇOFEN kindergarten teacher for over 8 years in the Immersion stream at ŁÁU,WEL,NEW School (ŁTS). I graduated in 2014 with my Masters in Education with specialization in Indigenous language revitalization. I am currently a sessional SENÇOFEN instructor at the University of Victoria in the WSENÇOFEN,ISTW language revitalization diploma and I also teach language in the SENÇOFEN Bachelors of Education at UVic. I am currently working as the SENÇOFEN language facilitator for ŁTS and WSÁNEĆ Leadership Secondary School (WŁSS). My dream is to see the very first cohort of immersion students graduate in the bilingual program and enter into the WSENÇOFEN,ISTW post-secondary program.

I offer now our purpose, our philosophy, for our children at our SENÇOFEN language survival school. SPEŁAKEN TFE STEŁITKEŁ ŁTE. Our children are our flowers, we must nurture them to grow. My elders have taught me ÁTOL EN ÁLI SNÁTWS - Respect your

beautiful personal gifts. All students have these gifts and strengths, and it is up to us to assist them in expanding their knowledge base in a respectful, caring way. Our Elders also shared that we must remind and root them to the ground, so that they will flower with their ancestors' teachings of respect for all things that walk, swim and fly on this earth. Reciprocal respect is the foundation of creating a healthy and strong community. I believe that instilling a WŚÁNEĆ worldview is our way of decolonizing ourselves. Learning our ancestral language and in practicing our culture, we will follow a path to healing. When we speak our language to our community and to the children we are demonstrating the importance of holding on to our WŚÁNEĆ beliefs.

This philosophy reminds us why we do what we do. I share it here in hopes that it may remind you why you do what you do, why you are reading this collection and what we may be able to achieve together or alone when we work hard, and never give up.

SƧÁ, ŁTE ŚWƧÁLEČEN TTE LE,NOŃET SCUL,ÁUTW

ĆSE LÁ,E TTE XAXE TTE SƧÁL ŁTE.
 U,DOT OL TTE SENĆOFEN ÁLE E TIÁ WŚÁNEĆ.
 WUĆIST TTE SKÁLs I, TTE Ś,XENANs ĆSE LÁ,E TTE ÁLENENEČ TTE WŚÁNEĆ.
 TE,ITKEN I,U TI TTE S,YESES SU ŚTENIST ČENTOL E TIÁ ÁNEČ I, ČE,ČÁČELES E TTE
 ŚW,ƧÁLEČEN E TIÁ WŚÁNEĆ.
 SNINU SE TTE I,TOTELNEW I, SIÁM,SET SE TTE EŁTÁLNEW.
 SIÁM ŚWEŁOKE SU NIŁ.

Our language comes from our sacred one.

SENĆOFEN is the original language of this emerging land.

We must teach from the ways and beliefs of our WŚÁNEĆ homeland.

We will continue to value our truths, our history and will move forward with contemporary education rooted in our WŚÁNEĆ worldview.

Our program will model WŚÁNEĆ disciplines and values to foster respected families.

HÁ,EQ ŁTE SE:

ŁŁEŁ TTE ÁLENENEŁ I, ET ŁNINEŁ TTE SKÁŁ ŁTE. NIŁ ĆELÁNEN TTE SKÁŁ ŁTE.
U STI ŁTE ŁS I,ŁEŁSILEN TTE SKÁŁ ŁTE. U, HÍ TTE WILNEW, KEN SU ŁEŁ, NONET TTE SŁÁ,
ŁTE SKÁŁ.

I,ÍYMET TTE WILNEW. I,ÍYMET TTE WSÁNEĆ.
NETOLNEW YEW ŁTE OL.
HELIT TTE ĆELÁNEN ŁTE HIF SE E TIÁ TENEW

We must remember:

Our language connects us to our homeland. Our language is our birthright. It is important for us to continue to transmit our language from generation to generation. Only through immersion will our language succeed.

Our WSÁNEĆ people are beautiful. Our WSÁNEĆ Nation is beautiful.

We must be one mind, one heart, one nation.

Let our ancestral rights live long into the future on this land.

SXEDFELISIYE Renee J-Sampson
SENĆOFEN Language Facilitator, WSÁNEĆ School Board
Instructor, University of Victoria
sxedtelisiye@gmail.com

Citation: SXEDFELISIYE (Renee J-Sampson). (2021). I,ÍYMET TTE SKÁŁ ŁTE: Our language is beautiful. *WINHEC: International Journal of Indigenous Education Scholarship*, 16(1), pp. 1-3. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18357/wj1202120259>. Special Issue on *Indigenous Language Revitalization: Innovation, Reflection and Future Directions*, Guest Co-Editors: Drs. Onowa McIvor and Kari A. B. Chew.