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TLA'AMIN NATION

ᑭᐱᑭᐱᑭᐱᑭ Revitalization Strategy

2025 – 2030





Dedication

*This plan is dedicated to
Brienne Louie, Tla'amin Nation
Language Coordinator and
to the Tla'amin Elders and
Ancestors who have worked so
hard to protect our language
and keep it alive.*

*čəčəhatanapešt
χaλnomεč*

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Preamble

The Tla'amin Nation is a self-governing treaty Nation located on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia, within our traditional territory known as ʔəms giḵḵ. Our people have lived on and cared for these lands that the Creator has provided for us since time immemorial, maintaining deep cultural and spiritual connections to the environment, waterways, and resources.

Today, the Tla'amin Nation is home to approximately 1,200 citizens, with many members residing in Tla'amin's main village, located near present-day qathet (formerly Powell River). Others live throughout the broader region and beyond, contributing to the Nation's growing sense of community and cultural resurgence.

As a self-governing Nation, we humbly exercise law-making authority over areas essential to our well-being, including community programming, economic development, and the revitalization of language and culture ([ta-ow](#)). Through initiatives like ʔayʔaḵuθəm language preservation, immersive education, and cultural gatherings, we ensure that our traditions thrive for future generations.

Tla'amin governance is guided by our constitution, rooted in self-determination and built upon the principles of unity, accountability, and respect for our citizens.





Vision Statement

The Tla'amin Nation aims to revitalize and sustain ʔayʔaʔuθəm through community driven initiatives that celebrate cultural heritage, foster intergenerational knowledge transfer and empower speakers to reclaim their Tla'amin identity. Through the guidance of our elders, ʔayʔaʔuθəm will be prominent in our daily life.



Message from the hegus

We are blowing on the ember

The Dog Children is a central story for Tla'amin people. In it, a young woman defies Tla'amin law and is separated from her community. Her čičye (grandmother), risking the ire of her people, takes pity on the young woman and buries an ember in a clam shell so that her granddaughter will have the gift of fire.

Left alone, feeling dark and hopeless, a dog alerts the young woman to the ember buried under the sand. Blowing on the ember and waking up this gift of fire, the young woman ultimately restores herself in the eyes of her community and becomes an original ancestor of present-day Tla'amin people.

It was the čičye's act of love, risk, and sacrifice that kept her granddaughter alive. We owe this ancestor our very existence.

Today, as Tla'amin people, we face another immense challenge: the fragility of our language—the language that teaches us how to be human.

When our grandparents were taken to Residential School, they protected our language. They put that ember in a clam shell and hid it away for us. In so many ways, they risked everything for our inheritance. Now, our generation has opened the shell, and we are reviving the embers into a sustaining fire.

This proposal and Tla'amin's five-year Language Revitalization Plan is full of hope. Our Nation, our community, is working hard to live up to our grandparents' sacrifice, and we are racing against time to do it.

In closing, Tla'amin is on a strong path forward to revitalizing our ʔayʔajuθəm language. Having and using ʔayʔajuθəm in our everyday lives is an honour because it's a language we almost lost.

We invite you to walk alongside us in this critical mission. We are here to answer any questions you may have about our proposal and plan.

Hegus John Hackett





kʷɪkʷɪkʷəθays - the Ragged island group

“This 5-Year Language Revitalization Plan and proposal contain the structures and tools we need to navigate the tides—to rebuild the clear, visible connections between our people and ʔayʔajuθəm, ensuring that no one is left stranded.”



Message from Council

k^wɔk^wɔk^wθays - its all broken up.

ʔajɛç^wɔt?

k^wət^θ nan Brandon Louie. As a recently elected leader and portfolio holder for language and culture it is an honour to share this proposal and Tla'amin's five-year Language Revitalization Plan with you.

I often visit with my uncle Freddy, a fluent and first language ʔayʔajuθəm speaker, a keeper of Tla'amin place names and other forms of men's knowledge.

Freddy recently characterized my relationship with ʔayʔajuθəm as k^wɔk^wɔk^wθays.

k^wɔk^wɔk^wθays means "it's all broken up" and is also the place name for the Copeland or Ragged Islands.

At k^wɔk^wɔk^wθays during low tide you can walk from one island to another, the connections are clear and visible. At high tide the connections less clear, and it's not possible to get from one to another without a boat.

This 5-Year Language Revitalization Plan and proposal contain the structures and tools we need to navigate the tides—to rebuild the clear, visible connections between our people and ʔayʔajuθəm, ensuring that no one is left stranded.

It is our vision that ʔayʔajuθəm becomes the first language in our house of government. Goal 9 of our Nation's Comprehensive Plan directs us as leadership to integrate ʔayʔajuθəm throughout ʔəms giʔe (our land) and everything we do. Thank you for reading about our vision and being part of this journey with us.

Tla'amin Executive Councillor
Community Services Housepost

Brandon Louie



“The identity of who we are is ʔayʔajʉθəm, our language. This is what makes us unique amongst all the other Coast Salish language groups. As we aim to revitalize our language, we look back to where we began on this journey. We raise our hands to those that have helped us get to this chapter in our history. As we move forward, we lift-up those that are working to bring back our sacred language.” - Tla’amin Culture and Heritage Manager kespaul, Drew Blaney



Introduction

The Tla'amin language team will continue the good work of language documentation that has been on-going for the last 30+ years. This work entails recording words and phrases, transcribing language documents and research of language resources, some of which are close to 100 years old. We will also work closely with our sister nations of Homalco, Klahoose and K'omoks on language revitalization initiatives as we share the same language.

The Tla'amin ʔayʔajʉθəm Revitalization Plan outlines five strategic goals to guide language preservation and growth over the next five years:

1. Preserve and expand the ʔayʔajʉθəm language database.
2. Strengthen language learning through immersion programs.
3. Build capacity for ʔayʔajʉθəm teachers and language leaders.
4. Embed ʔayʔajʉθəm in community, governance, and daily life.
5. Promote collaboration and innovation across Sister Nations.

Together, these goals ensure ʔayʔajʉθəm thrives for future generations.

Goal 1: Preserve and Expand the ʔayʔajuθəm Database

Learning on-demand for Tla’amin people, where ever they may live



The overarching objective is to create a comprehensive linguistic repository that supports on-demand learning and cultural preservation efforts.

Linguists emphasize that documenting a substantial number of words and phrases is crucial for effective language revitalization. While there isn't a universally agreed-upon number, 20,000 words and phrases is considered a critical benchmark.

Comprehensive documentation is vital to capture the richness and nuance of ʔayʔajuθəm. To meet our five-year goal of 10,000 words and 12,000 phrases, Tla’amin Nation must document 174 words and 156 phrases per quarter. This effort ensures the preservation of ʔayʔajuθəm and makes it accessible for future generations.

This extensive documentation serves as a foundation for educational resources, immersion programs, and intergenerational transmission, all of which are key components in revitalizing and sustaining the Tla’amin language.

By capturing a wide array of vocabulary and expressions, our workers can develop effective teaching materials and promote daily usage, thereby strengthening the language's presence in both cultural practices and business and community contexts.

Tla’amin currently has 6,530 words and 8,901 phrases recorded. To preserve the ʔayʔajuθəm language for future generations, the goal is to digitize and document a total of 22,000 entries including 10,000 words and 12,000 phrases, creating a robust and accessible database on the First Voices platform.

Collaboration with fluent speakers, linguists, and Sister Nations—Xwémalhkwu, Klahoose, and K’ómoks— will ensure accuracy while meeting the long-term preservation goal of 22,000 entries.



Measurement:

- **Progress Tracking:** Quarterly updates on the number of words and phrases documented and uploaded. Target- 174 words and 156 phrases per quarter.
- **Community Engagement Metrics:** User data on First Voices platform downloads and access frequency.
- **Community Contribution:** Number of fluent speakers and community members contributing to recordings and validation.

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Goal 2: Strengthen Language Learning Through Immersion Programs

- a) Expand the qaymıχ^wqenəmšt (school-age immersion program) in partnership with qat^θet School District, increasing instructional time, literacy, and numeracy in ʔayʔajuθəm.

The *qaymıχ^wqenəmšt* program (meaning “we are all learning the language together”) is a cornerstone of Tla’amin Nation’s revitalization strategy for school-age children. In partnership with qat^θet School District, the program currently runs two full days per week, where children receive instruction in ʔayʔajuθəm focused on both language literacy and numeracy. Building on its early success, we aim to expand instructional time to additional days, ensuring deeper immersion. This growth will include structured lessons covering not only basic language skills like greetings, numbers, and weather but also advanced literacy skills such as orthography recognition, reading, and writing.

“With other language teachers like French or Spanish, you could log on to any website, teachers pay teachers, or download curriculum and packages. But for us as a team, we were simultaneously teaching while creating and developing our content and curriculum at the same time.”

qaymıχ^wqenəmšt instructor
Karina Peters



A key goal of the expansion is to create a strong foundation for primary-aged students (Kindergarten to Grade 3), helping them transition seamlessly into advanced programs. The inclusion of Elders in the classroom, alongside certified Tla’amin teachers and apprentices, ensures intergenerational knowledge transfer and cultural context. Additionally, expanding resources like culturally relevant learning materials and assessments will help track progress while promoting confidence in young learners.

Measurement: Enrollment, literacy progression data, and evaluation data including qualitative feedback from families will measure success. Ultimately, this program may serve as the foundation for developing a full-time Tla’amin language school, fostering lifelong fluency.



b) Grow the Adult Immersion Program with UVIC's Indigenous Language Proficiency Certificate, supporting advanced language learning and pathways to teacher certification.

The Adult Immersion Program offers an essential pathway for adults in Tla'amin and Sister Nations to achieve fluency in ʔayʔaʔuθəm. Partnering with the University of Victoria (UVIC), the program will implement the Certificate in Indigenous Language Proficiency, enabling students to engage in structured, high-quality instruction. This certificate builds on foundational language skills while introducing linguistics, advanced grammar, and conversational fluency.

The program will follow a hybrid learning model, combining online courses with in-person gatherings. Participants will also benefit from the master-apprentice approach, where fluent Elders work closely with learners to enhance conversational proficiency in real-life scenarios. As learners advance, they will gain confidence in their ability to become future instructors

or contribute to resource development like curriculum creation and recordings.

Importantly, this program also aligns with broader educational pathways. Interested participants will have the opportunity to transition into UVIC's Diploma in Indigenous Language Revitalization (DILR) and, potentially, a Bachelor of Education or Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Language Fluency. This structured approach ensures that the Adult Immersion Program produces not only proficient speakers but also certified teachers equipped to lead community programs.

Measurement: Enrollment, retention, course completion, and pathways into teaching certification will highlight the program's success and long-term impact.





c) Develop supportive programs like silent speaker gatherings to unlock knowledge among fluent but non-active speakers.

Silent speakers—individuals who understand a language but lack the confidence to speak it—represent an important area of focus for language revitalization. The Tla’amin language team recognizes the importance of helping Tla’amin speakers with “frozen tongues” to unlock their latent fluency and contribute to the revitalization of ʔayʔaʃuθəm. Silent speaker gatherings will offer safe, small-group settings designed to promote comfort, connection, and re-engagement with the language.

These gatherings will feature conversational practice facilitated by Elders and fluent speakers. Activities such as storytelling, shared meals, and guided dialogue will encourage participants to use the language in natural, low-pressure settings. By prioritizing relationship-building and cultural grounding, the

gatherings aim to reduce the anxiety or fear associated with speaking publicly.

In addition to these gatherings, supportive tools like vocabulary prompts, recordings, and culturally relevant conversation starters will help silent speakers reintroduce ʔayʔaʃuθəm into their daily lives. Over time, silent speakers may feel empowered to support other learners, record new words and phrases, or even join formal language revitalization efforts as mentors or instructors.

Measurement: Success will be evaluated based on participation rates, increased language use among silent speakers, and their involvement in broader community programs over time.

Goal 3: Build Capacity for ʔayʔajuθəm Teachers and Language Leaders

a) Train and Certify New ʔayʔajuθəm Teachers

We're building teachers from the ground up—creating well-paying, rewarding careers for Tla'amin people who have shown a passion for ʔayʔajuθəm. Through partnerships with Vancouver Island University (VIU) and the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, we're opening doors for emerging instructors to get their teacher education and Education Assistant (EA) certifications without having to leave home. These programs give Tla'amin citizens the tools to become confident, certified teachers who can carry the language forward for the next generation.

One of the biggest challenges we face in spreading our language is a lack of semi-fluent teachers—those who know the language well enough to teach but need support to reach full confidence and certification. By investing in these learners, we're closing the gap and helping more community members step into teaching roles. Every semi-fluent speaker trained and supported brings us one

step closer to seeing ʔayʔajuθəm in classrooms, homes, and daily life across Tla'amin Nation.

This approach is about more than classrooms—it's about supporting community members who already love the language, helping them grow their skills and turn that passion into careers that make a difference. Every new teacher trained means stronger programs for our kids, adults, and families, and a brighter future for ʔayʔajuθəm.

Measurement:

- Track how many citizens enroll, complete certification, and move into teaching roles.
- Monitor job satisfaction and retention rates for certified teachers.
- Measure growth in student participation and learning outcomes across programs.





b) Implement a Master-Apprentice Model to Strengthen Fluency

The master-apprentice model is about building fluency from the heart of the community. It pairs fluent Elders and master speakers with motivated learners—apprentices—who want to take their language skills to the next level. This one-on-one, hands-on learning happens in real-life settings: sharing stories, cooking meals, or spending time on the land. Apprentices learn *ʔayʔajʉθəm* in ways that feel natural and meaningful, building confidence while honoring the relationships that hold our language strong.

This model isn't just about learning—it's about preparing apprentices to become the next generation of teachers and language leaders. By investing in those who have already shown interest and commitment, we're building teachers from the bottom up and creating real opportunities for citizens to turn their love for the language into lifelong, rewarding careers.

Measurement:

- Number of master-apprentice pairs are active and how many hours they spend together.
- Measure growth in fluency for apprentices with oral assessments.
- Track apprentices moving into teaching roles, leadership positions, or mentoring others.

Goal 4: Embed ʔayʔajuθəm in Community, Governance, and Daily Life



a. Enhance Visibility through Signage and Communications

Increasing the presence of ʔayʔajuθəm in public spaces and our Nation-driven communications is key to normalizing the language. Strategies include:

Street Signage: Install signs in ʔayʔajuθəm throughout the community, including street names, public buildings, and landmarks. This practice reinforces language visibility and cultural pride.

Official Communications: Incorporate ʔayʔajuθəm into newsletters, social media, and official documents. Bilingual publications can engage both speakers and learners, promoting inclusivity.

Digital Platforms: Tla'amin is renewing its website in 2026 with an emphasis on language resources. The Tla'amin Nation ʔəms nəm app will be leveraged for language learning. Tla'amin is also lobbying First Voices for app updates.

Measurement:

- **Signage Implementation:** Track the number and locations of signs installed.
- **Engagement Metrics:** Monitor readership statistics, social media interactions, and website/app usage analytics to assess reach and impact.

b. Promote Language Use in Government Operations

Integrating ʔayʔaʔuθəm into governmental functions demonstrates institutional commitment and encourages daily use. Initiatives include:

- ❑ **Paid Learning Time:** Allocate work hours for employees to attend language classes, signaling organizational support for language acquisition and reacquisition.
- ❑ **Staff Language Classes:** Offer regular, on-site language courses tailored to varying proficiency levels, fostering a supportive learning environment.
- ❑ **Incentivizing Fluency:** Implement pay differentials or bonuses for employees achieving language proficiency, motivating staff to engage in learning.

Measurement:

- ❑ **Participation Rates:** Record employee enrollment and attendance in language programs.
- ❑ **Proficiency Assessments:** Evaluate language skills through standardized tests to measure progress.
- ❑ **Policy Adoption:** Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of incentive structures.





c. Promote Community Gatherings, Including Bi-Annual Open Houses and Language Events

Community Language Classes, offered on a weekly basis, are a critical piece of embedding ʔayʔajuθəm into everyday life. These classes focus on teaching the IPA Orthography writing system, providing learners with foundational literacy skills that are essential for long-term fluency. With over 50 community members participating to date and consistent weekly attendance averaging 25 people, these classes demonstrate a strong interest and commitment to revitalizing the language.

Moving forward, we will integrate these classes into broader community gatherings and events to foster pride and engagement. By promoting opportunities to share progress—such as through storytelling nights, public reading circles, or community showcases—we can celebrate achievements and encourage even more participation. Expanding access through virtual options or additional class times can further meet the needs of community members at all stages of their learning journey.

Measurement:

- Track weekly attendance and growth in participation.
- Monitor literacy progression through assessments of orthography recognition and writing skills.
- Collect participant feedback to inform future class structures and content.



Goal 5: Promote Collaboration and Innovation Across Sister Nations

The Tla'amin Nation, alongside our Sister Nations—Xwémalhkwa (Homalco), Klahoose, and K'ómoks—share a deep history as one people connected through language, land, and culture. This unity was fractured by the Indian Reserve Commission, which imposed physical and social boundaries that disrupted our relationships and weakened the threads of our shared identity. Today, we find ourselves in a **race against time** to preserve and restore ʔayʔaʔuθəm, our ancestral language, which holds the stories, teachings, and spirit of our people.

Collaboration is not only an opportunity—it is a necessity. Through shared resources, innovation, and mutual support, we can overcome these historical barriers, strengthen our language, and rebuild what was always meant to endure.

By coming together as Sister Nations, we honor our relations to one another while working toward a common goal: ensuring that ʔayʔaʔuθəm thrives for generations to come.

a. Convene Sister Nations to Share Resources and Collaborate on Seasonal Curricula

Working together with our Sister Nations—**Xwémalhkwa (Homalco), Klahoose, and K'ómoks**—strengthens language revitalization across all ʔayʔaʔuθəm-speaking communities. By **sharing resources** like teaching materials, recordings, and lesson plans, we avoid duplication of efforts and create stronger programs that benefit everyone. A key focus will be developing a **seasonal curriculum** based on the 13 Moons calendar, aligning language learning with the cultural knowledge of seasons, traditional activities, and natural cycles.

This curriculum will feature lessons that explore **seasonal words, phrases, and activities**, such as traditional harvesting practices, weather vocabulary, and ceremonies. Collaborating with Sister Nations allows us to celebrate shared knowledge while honoring the unique strengths of each community. Regular gatherings—in person and virtual—will help maintain momentum, reduce duplication of effort, and ensure the curriculum is meeting the needs of all learners.

Measurement:

- Frequency of collaborative meetings and resource exchanges among Tla'amin, Xwémalhkwa, Klahoose, and K'ómoks.
- Completion of seasonal curriculum materials and their adoption in schools and programs.
- Participant feedback on the relevance and impact of shared resources in their learning journeys.





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