SQUAMISH YOUTH ARE BRINGING THEIR LANGUAGE BACK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VANCOUVER — The Squamish Language is a living language - returning even stronger now through the voices of its young people. For decades, the Squamish Nation community has been striving to recreate a vibrant community of language speakers, after years of language loss. This past fall, SFU joined these efforts with a new academic program - a Squamish Language Certificate. The aim of this program is to create a new generation of highly proficient adult speakers. Participants in the program have already learned over 1,000 words during 500 hours of instruction, with still 500 hours to go over the next four months. The ultimate goal: second language fluency.

SFU's First Nations Language Centre and Kwi Awt Stelmexw (a non-profit Squamish led organization) partnered to create this eight-month program to teach the Squamish Language (one of two languages Indigenous to Vancouver) to 15 students annually.

The program is now accepting applicants for a new 2017-2018 cohort to start this September at SFU Vancouver Campus.

The adult immersion program is modeled after similar Indigenous language programs in Canada and New Zealand. Each year, students complete approximately 1,000 classroom and practice hours taught exclusively in the language. Classes run from September to April. Students work with instructors, linguists, and speakers of the Squamish Language.

QUOTES:

"The Truth and Reconciliation Calls-to-Action include calls to support Indigenous language education. This includes a call to universities to support the development of programs in Indigenous languages." -- Khelsilem, language instructor, Kwi Awt Stelmexw programming director

"We’re extremely proud of the success we’re seeing and hope to share this model with the world." -- Khelsilem

"Our language wasn't dying; it was put to sleep. This opportunity is our chance to wake it up." -- Char George, student & current participant in the immersion program

"Texwl'am' mi k'anatsut ta snichim-chet. Our language is truly returning. It’s great to be able to have conversations with young people in our own language." -- Professor Peter Jacobs, visiting professor from UVic.
"We are very excited to be partnering with Kwi Awt Stelmexw and the Squamish People to offer our Certificate Program in First Nations Language Proficiency through this initiative.” -- Professor Marianne Ignace, director of SFU’s First Nations Language Centre.

"The talents and enterprise that this group is mobilizing, and their approach to language revitalization, are truly exceptional." -- Professor Marianne Ignace, director of SFU’s First Nations Language Centre.

Khelsilem and some students in the program are available for interviews. Arrangements can be made to coordinate a media site-visit to the program happening at SFU Vancouver Campus at Harbour Centre.

QUICK FACTS:

- The immersion program will be offered in partnership with Simon Fraser University’s First Nations Language Centre and Department of Linguistics as an accredited Certificate Program in First Nations Language Proficiency through SFU*.
- The program will include 1,000 classroom hours of immersion instruction, completed over eight months, each year.
- Up to 15 students will participate each year in this full time program. Upon completion, students will receive 30 units of academic credits which may be applied towards a Bachelor degree at SFU.
- 15 students are currently in the first offering of the program; second offering now looking for participants.
- Prospective participants must apply to be selected for the program.
- Applications are now being accepted until February 13th, 2017 by 12:00pm.

Visit the Kwi Awt Stelmexw website to learn more: www.KwiAwtStelmexw.com/apply. Join the conversation on Twitter: #SquamishLanguage

CONTACT

Khelsilem
Programming Director
contact@KwiAwtStelmexw.com
604-809-6282