



Family name, Given name

Hedberg, Nancy

### Summary of Proposal

The summary of your proposal should indicate the challenges or issues to be addressed; the overall goal and objectives of the proposed partnership; and the breadth of the partnership, and the meaningful engagement of the partners involved.

#### Coast Salish ways of speaking: Documenting discourse as a path to fluency

This project focuses on the language of the Hul'q'umi'num', a Coast Salish people who live along the Salish Sea in British Columbia. Today around forty fluent first-language speakers remain, mostly over the age of sixty, and thus Hul'q'umi'num' is considered an endangered language. Our team of First Nations knowledge holders and academic experts are actively engaged in research to document and analyze the language, with the goal of providing reference and teaching materials in support of language education. We have learned much about Hul'q'umi'num' grammar and lexicon over the last thirty years, thanks to SSHRC-funded research. However, as the work of teaching the language has fallen on the younger generation, all of whom have English as their first language, research is urgently needed on authentic Coast Salish ways of speaking.

By documenting the public speeches and conversations of the Elders and analyzing the language in use, we can provide insight into what Elders actually do when they are using Hul'q'umi'num' to speak to each other in a variety of natural situations. Fluency is a matter of not just what you say but how you say it. The tone of voice, discourse particles, interjections, vocatives, and other features of language in use are important for conveying information and opinion, expressing politeness or rudeness, and using language for emotional closeness or distance.

The objective of this project is to work toward the survival of the Hul'q'umi'num' language, and thus we seek to reach as many language learners as possible. Our hope is that by making the language accessible and entertaining, we will galvanize a new generation of language learners. We will publish the Elders' speeches and conversations on the web and in print and develop web-based lessons pointing out discourse features. The web is the preferred delivery method because it allows the presentation of audio and video files together with transcriptions and translations. Over the course of the project we seek to shift the balance from passive involvement, where our researchers record, listen to, transcribe, and analyze the Elders' words, to active involvement, where the researchers participate in conversations and speeches, becoming more fluent in the language. Sharing the results with teachers will assist them in integrating communication-based methods into their language classes.

Capacity building is an important aspect of our project, which partners First Nations Elders and university scholars with First Nations graduate students. Our project adopts decolonized methodologies based on traditional Coast Salish learning models, encouraging students to draw on their cultural knowledge, language fluency, and oratory talents to become more fluent in the language, while concurrently developing their skills in linguistic analysis and written communication, opening a path for employment in post-secondary education. Presenting our analyses of Hul'q'umi'num' discourse to linguistic audiences will help inform cross-cultural discourse typology, and explaining our collaborative model of research will help inspire other communities who are struggling to maintain their languages.