

by
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Ła Bala Sgan

WELCOME
(THE CEDAR MAT IS SPREAD OUT)

**'Nii wila wilaayksm na lp algyaxm gu Sm'algyax.
Na lp algyaxm int luunda hoksnm
a lax yuubm Ts'msyen.**

**Our Sm'algyax language represents
who we are as Ts'msyen people.**

Our language connects us to our territories.

Sm'algyax is the language spoken by the Ts'msyen people who have lived for thousands of years on the North Coast of British Columbia, Canada. Our Sm'algyax language is the foundation of who we are as Ts'msyen people. Sm'algyax is spoken by people from our Ts'msyen communities of M̓ax̓laxaala (Metlakatla), Txalgiw (Hartley Bay), L̓ax Kw'alaams (Port Simpson), Gitxaala (L̓ax klan), Gidasduu (Klemtu), Gits'ilaasü (Kitselas), Gits'm̓k̓eelm (Kitsumkalum) as well as by Ts'msyen people who live in Prince Rupert, Terrace, Alaska and beyond.

Our Ts'msyen language is in serious decline due to the oppressive policies of the churches and government since the eighteen-hundreds. Colonization has had a devastating impact on our culture, language and people, and continues to do so. Most of our speakers are over seventy years old. Our elders and leaders strongly believe that it is critical to do everything that can be done to save our Sm'algyax language. Sm'algyax language, culture and spirituality go hand in hand and connect us to our territory. We know for a fact that Sm'algyax is a critical vehicle to instill cultural pride and

identity in our young people. We celebrate the language-learning successes of our children and youth, which they are able to confidently share with their families and communities.

**It's important to learn the history of where
you come from or where you live.**

— Charles Hays Student

Our Ts'msyen chiefs, matriarchs, elders, leaders, parents and youth have supported the teaching of Sm'algyax in our public schools in School District 52 from kindergarten to grade twelve for all learners since 1997. Previous to that, Sm'algyax was offered in three of our Ts'msyen community schools for well over 30 years. Community-based adult Sm'algyax learning continues to take place in Prince Rupert and other villages.

Our Sm'algyax program is one of the few First Nations language programs in British Columbia that has been supported by sustained, long-term curriculum and program development. Our program was one of the first in BC to develop an Integrated Resource Package (IRP), which made it possible for the language to be an accredited part of the school curriculum. Offering a strong Sm'algyax program is a goal of our Aboriginal Education Council and is supported by our School District Board of Education. We also acknowledge that we have a long way to go.

**We need to go below the surface,
students need to be involved,
not just as spectators.**

— Gitga'at Student (Hartley Bay)

The Sm'algyax program is instilling a strong sense of pride in our learners. As the program is currently offered, it does not have the capacity to build Sm'algyax fluency due to the limited instructional

time available. The continuing impact of colonization is that today's learners of Sm'algyax have few opportunities to hear our language spoken in the home and in the community. The development and the delivery of our Sm'algyax program is guided by our Ts'msyen Language Authority and our Sm'algyax Committee.

For many years, the Aboriginal Education Department was situated in the basement of one of our elementary schools. We were one of the corner offices in the District Resource Center. In 2004, the Aboriginal Education Council started discussions with SD Board of Education and the Management team about the importance of having our Aboriginal programs and services housed in a place that would honour and reflect the sense of pride in our quality Aboriginal Education programs, services and resources. Council also wanted a place to heighten how important Aboriginal Education is in the district, a district with over 60% Aboriginal student population.

**Aboriginal graduates should be able
to excel in any chosen life path...**

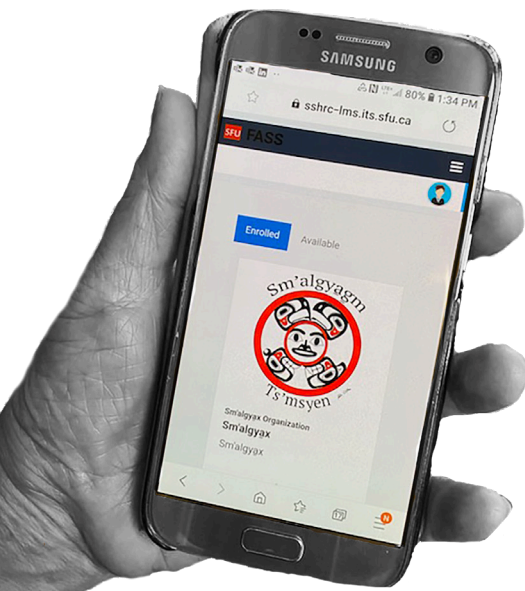
Strong in two worlds, not just one.

— Gitga'at Teacher (Hartley Bay)

After many meetings, a separate building was identified and renovated for the Aboriginal Education Department. Our Aboriginal Education Council in partnership with our Ts'msyen Language Authority named the building "Wap Sigatgyet," which means "House of Building Strength" in Sm'algyax. It is a place that is welcoming and has a strong sense of belonging for the community and all partner groups.

For over 14 years, Wap Sigatgyet has welcomed and hosted a wide range of District and community meetings daily. The Sm'algyax Committee, Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority and the Sm'algyax teachers meet regularly there, and Wap Sigatgyet houses a large Aboriginal content library, along with teacher and student resources for use

Sm'alg̱yax App



First Nations Language Platform
<https://sshrc-lms.its.sfu.ca>



Sm'alg̱yax Learning

A middle school student shares her perspective
<https://youtu.be/fhneoakWo-A>

in the classroom. Since Wap Sigatgyet opened, the importance of Aboriginal Education and Aboriginal history, language and culture has heightened in the community and in the District.

**When people found out about my culture,
it was like all of a sudden it altered
who I was as a person.
— Charles Hays Student**

Currently the Sm'alg̱yax Language Committee is continuing to work on developing a wide range of quality resources to support Sm'alg̱yax learning in our schools and communities. One of these resources is this Sm'alg̱yax app.

As with all of our valued Sm'alg̱yax resources this app is in constant review and update. It is our hope that this developing resource will help in keeping our valuable Ts'msyen Sm'alg̱yax language alive by exposing you as a learner to practice materials in sound, text and images. We hope that you will find it a useful resource in your Ts'msyen Sm'alg̱yax learning.

Sm'alg̱yax Living Legacy Talking Dictionary
<http://web.unbc.ca/~smalg̱yax>

We acknowledge and honour
the dedication of our valued
Ts'msyen language and culture
experts and educators who have
contributed to keeping our
language alive over many years
past, present and future.