RESTORING OUR LANGUAGE THROUGH CONNECTING STORIES

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“CONNECTING STORIES” COMMUNITY RESEARCH PROJECT

• Chief Atahm School, a Secwepemc immersion school in south-central British Columbia, partnered in the Simon Fraser University’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research initiative, "First Nations languages in the 21st century: looking back, looking forward”

• Community-based researchers recorded personal narratives of 5 fluent Elders

• Start from the contemporary context and work backwards to link students to land, history, and traditional stories
ON USING STORY

Humans are drawn to narrative

- Secwepemc oral tradition: slexlexey’e (remembered stories of events) & stsptekwle (transformer stories)
- holistic learning – land, values, language, patterns

Adaptive feature of story

- help us make meaning in times of change
- come to terms with trauma
- naming and claiming of our history
COLLECTING STORIES

1. Interview Elders about their early life
   1. Record, transcribe, archive

2. Research Team reviewed tapes and transcription with Elders
   1. Select short stories for each Elder with high entertainment value
   2. Adapted stories using simplified language for use in primary grade immersion classes

3. Storybook artwork/layout/accompanying audio
   1. E-books and printed books
Words to learn:

cleqwétít - chickens laying eggs
ckweltsenéltn - cookstove
cpyu7é7ílcw - chicken house
ell īri7 pexyet - later the next day
estqiypúsme - I was surprised
kwéstente-kuc - we named it
m-tseqwtsqéple7cetses - he pecked me
m-yecnéll -
ta7ks xwexwisten es kwécstsi - I don't want to take it
tsecststst - left there
pulste - kill

Le mut-we ne Tseckepcwecwécwtkwe métén Kyé7e ell re Kí7ce.
Cw7it lu7 r spyu7 cíleqwetít ne cpyu7é6é7élcw ell ne sképélélcw.

Estpe7é6éxw te cpyu7é6é7élcw méte cpepyu7é6é7élts...

...yéxmel llwélens r neku7!

W7ec ke ne cpyu7é6é7élcw wélé pemín r neku7 te ú7se tsecectst te ne c7ú7setnl.

Kwen r ú7se ell m-úllcwne te tsítcw. “Téke Mem, pemín ne c7ú7setnl!” Sëwetses, “M-kéne le ki7ces?” Tsut-ke, “Tá7e k sw7ecs.”

Tri7 m-metén ell m-kectén te sëwellkwe. Kwëstente-kuc, Tsetcwécwags!

Cw7it kuc r séyces ne secqéltqitec.

M-kekelépetses, m-tegwégw-kuc ell m-seqwtsqéple7catses!
Ne liwéisten, re Kyé7e m-tusions, “Yehe7e lu7 r Tsetcwécwqs? Ta7ks xwexwisten, es kwéctsi te7 spyu7?”

M-Tsúmlecten.

Re Kyé7e m-kwenses r mums te spyu7.

Ell íri7 pexyewt, le7e7uwi-kuc r sec7illens!

Ell íri7 pexyewt, le7e7uwi-kuc r sec7illens!

Re Kyé7e m-kwenses r mums te spyu7.

Ell íri7 pexyewt, le7e7uwi-kuc r sec7illens!

Henegw! M-yechell r Tsetcwécwqs le7 pulste!
CONNECTING PLACES

• Elders were asked to show us the areas they talked about in their interviews

• Identified, mapped, documented associated stories and data
Land-Based Learning Educational Goals

- for students to develop a connection to the places shared by the Elders
- match place names with traditional stories, “stsptekwle”
- to provide experiences so that the students can picture the land in their minds and have a sense of its diversity and richness

Strategies
- experience sights and sounds of the land
- create maps as reminders
- develop and express their personal connection with the land
- record and share traditional and personal stories in audio, video, text form
Connecting the Generations

Responsibility: to reconnect the younger generations to stories while meeting the challenge of language teaching and cultural reconnection.

- Storytelling as a vehicle for intergenerational transfer of language, history, and culture
- Positive relationship-building between the storyteller, the teacher, and the students
- Maintain the core elements of traditional storytelling
- Adapting the stories to make them comprehensible for language students
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| Personification of animal characters | Identify the characters in the story  
Describe the characteristics and traits of the characters  
What role does each character play in the story?  
How do the characters interact with each other? |
| Connection to the land  | Does the story happen at a specific location  
Identify place names, names of land marks, or forms  
Identify the names of plants  
How is land important to the story? |
| Repetition              | Use strategies like TPR-S to repeat the story many times  
Are there reoccurring themes in the story  
Do animals appear in different stories – what is their role? |
| Adaptability of story   | Selection of the story: ensure that the content in story is applicable for the age of the students  
Adapt details in the story: keep the core element of the story but make some modifications.  
Possible modifications: change the location of the story, take out a character, or add a character, lessen the story and the details |
| Story as entertainment  | Engage the audience  
Use props to enhance the story  
Use of voice and tone to enhance a story  
Storyteller is familiar with telling the story |
STORY VOCABULARY

pell
FOX LOSES HIS TAIL