

XWS 101: Mékw' Skwéyel Qwel'nékwel: Syllabus

Microsoft Teams | Wednesdays 5:30-7:30 pm PT | Hi7qw'íweles (Spring) 2026

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-3 pm by Microsoft Teams; by appointment In Person

Language and Course Resources: www.samishtribe.nsn.us/departments/language

Course Description

Newí7leng (welcome) e kw XWS 101: Mékw' Skwéyel Qwel'nékwel! In this course, we will hold six meetings throughout the next two months to practice and discuss Everyday Conversational Phrases e kw Xws7ámeshqen. Whether you are entering the course with no Xws7ámeshqen knowledge, minimal knowledge, or a strong background, you will engage in Xws7ámesh Sqwél'ten-s í7 Chelá7ngen-s (Samish Language and Culture) through our course outcomes:

1. Practice words and phrases related to everyday life e kw Xws7ámeshqen.
2. Converse with Xws7ámeshqen speakers of varying experiences and abilities to improve your own grasp of Xws7ámeshqen.
3. Become comfortable with sounds, cadences, and basic sentence structures of Xws7ámeshqen.
4. Be able to understand basic spoken and written Xws7ámeshqen. Be able to read and repeat pre-practiced phrases in both mock and real conversation. Be able to produce your own phrases e kw Xws7ámeshqen based on pre-practiced phrases.

***Mekw'exín qwál'-sxw e kwse sqwél'ten! (Use the language everywhere!)
— Shodzi'dzo:wa:' Damian Webster (Tonawanda Seneca), Language and Culture Revitalization Scholar, translated to Xws7ámeshqen by Olive Brend***

Method of Instruction

This course will be held online via Microsoft Teams. If more than 25 learners are interested in attending, the course may be split into multiple sections, depending on scheduling constraints. At this time, there is no in-person course being offered.

In-class Expectations

Throughout the course, you can expect me as your instructor to:

- Start and end class on time.
- Reply to emails/messages within 24 hours on weekdays.
- Return submitted work with feedback within 1 week.
- Support you and your language learning.

Likewise, I will expect you as learners to:

- Come to class on time and prepared.
- Engage with the class and course materials.
- Seek help and communicate when appropriate.
- Challenge yourself.

Speaking is optional but encouraged. Every student will be given an opportunity to speak Xws7ámeshqen, but no one is required to speak if they do not want. This course may serve the purpose of simply being a structured time and location where learners can listen to and read Xws7ámeshqen.

Mistakes are encouraged. All of us make mistakes even while speaking our first language, so we should expect and welcome mistakes while learning a new language. Support and encourage your classmates (and yourself) when mistakes are made.

“You cannot break this language. You cannot harm this language more than it has already been harmed.” — X’unei Lance Twitchell (Tlingit, Haida, and Yup’ik), *Language Revitalization Scholar*

Pronunciation and Grammar

The primary focus of this course is useful phrases and everyday conversations.

This course uses a “scripting” method of instruction, based on Communicative Language Teaching. Learners will have the opportunity to practice everyday conversation with each other from provided scripts, as well as to repeat words and phrases from higher-level learners.

Pronunciation and grammar will be secondary. While each class session will include some insight into the pronunciation and grammar rules of that day's subject, the main focus of this course is practicing speaking for everyday conversations.

For further instruction on pronunciation and grammar, **check out online resources on the Samish website** where new resources will be created and published throughout 2026. You may also visit me in office hours for further discussion and instruction on pronunciation and grammar.

Every month, the Xws7ámeshqen Department holds an online **Grammar for Nerds** meeting—a one-hour roundtable session where language speakers at any level can discuss linguistic and grammatical topics in an unstructured format. Visit the Samish web calendar for dates. Bring your grammar questions, comments, and insights to these sessions!

Weekly Homework and Assignments

Homework will be assigned each week. Some assignments can be submitted for feedback, and all assignments can be used for private self-study.

Most assignments include options for different learning styles: such as reading/writing, listening/speaking, or drawing/creating.

You should spend 30 minutes to 2 hours on your homework each week, depending on your language learning goals and learning style.

Readings and Materials

You must have access to email, the Internet, and Microsoft Teams.

Course materials will be provided online either via email or [via the course webpage](#). You will not need to purchase any required readings or materials for this course. Please see the end of this document for a list of recommended or supplementary materials which may be of interest to you.

Classroom Culture

By engaging in this work, you are demonstrating courage and commitment to difficult work. Please recall that your fellow learners are also engaging in this difficult work and be respectful of how they undertake this process.

Discriminatory behavior, hate speech, slurs, or any language intended to disrespect or harm others will not be tolerated in this class. We will respect each other and each other's identities, we will work collaboratively, we will listen to each other, and we will be

patient with one another. If you ever feel uncomfortable discussing any subject matter, please discuss this with me for accommodations.

Nilh enón u7 heyí scháy e tí7e Chelángen-lh tiyá. Istá7 qelát tímest!
(This is very important work in our culture. Let's try our hardest!)

In contrast to typical classrooms, **I would like to lower, change, or remove the barrier between teacher and learner.** While it is my role at Samish Indian Nation to teach Xws7ámeshqen, the vast majority of learners have far more experience with both the culture and the language than I do. When I say something contrary to what you know, make a mistake, or when you have extra information about a subject, please share that information with me and/or the class.

Decolonial work in a colonial society is often about combining traditional with colonial tactics. While the classroom setting (and Euro-American expectations therein) represents the colonial tactics, this change in teacher/learner barrier is a step toward removing these colonial hierarchies. It is a reminder that the “teacher” is not the sole holder of knowledge and that the “students” hold different perspectives and ways of knowing. Including all participants’ perspectives is part of making space for movement toward traditional tactics of cultural transmission.

As a part of this, I recognize that there is a long and violent history of white settlers occupying teaching roles in Indigenous communities. While history cannot be changed, teachers and learners can change the future. This is an ongoing discussion and I encourage you all to continue this discussion with me and each other in this and future courses as well as outside the classroom environment.

Sá7t-lh tse sáles-lh e tse Stómesh tse Sqwél'ten kw timesíset e kwse sqwél'ten-s. *(We raise our hands to the Language Warriors who have worked hard for their language.)*

Accommodations

If you need accommodations of any sort, please discuss them with me. If your accommodations are related to physical or digital media used in the course, you should also discuss them with the Xws7ámeshqen Multimedia Specialist, Thea Roe, troe@samishtribe.nsn.us.

Repeatability

This course will be repeated at least once a year, for both new and returning students. Additional language courses will be available in the future. You may take this course as

many times as you like. This course will be required to take more advanced Xws7ámeshqen courses.

Course Structure and Schedule (Roughly)

Wí:k Néts'e | Xwché mestel | 13 cheláw' e kw Pexsíseng

Week One | Introductions | April 1

Learners will get to know each other and the class expectations. They will also practice introducing themselves with their name and where they are from e kw Xws7ámeshqen.

Homework (Optional):

1. Practice introducing yourself e kw Xws7ámeshqen. Even just two phrases (____ t/se ne-sná7. Che-____-sen.) would be wonderful! **Nothing required to submit.**
2. Review the alphabet at [this link](#) and bring any tricky sounds to the next class session **or** office hours.

Wí:k Chése | Yá7 í7 Ená7 | 27 cheláw' e kw Pexsíseng

Week Two | Come and Go | April 15

Learners will practice a few common action words, centered around the movements of **Ená7** (Come) and **Yá7** (Go).

Homework (Choose One):

1. Write 5 sentences e kw Xws7ámeshqen using **Ená7** or **Yá7**. These sentences should reflect your daily life.
2. Draw a short comic (1-2 pages) portraying a character (you, a family member, a pet, anyone!) moving from place to place. Use **Ená7** or **Yá7** e kw Xws7ámeshqen for the captions.
3. Create a short vlog (30-45 seconds) portraying 2-3 places you visit regularly, narrating e kw Xws7ámeshqen and using **Ená7** or **Yá7**.

Wí:k Lhíxw | Xchít í7 Xchnígí7n | 12 cheláw' e kw Sxwán'elh

Week Three | Know and Feel | April 29

Learners will practice variations of the common verb root **Xch-** in order to describe how they know or feel about things.

Homework (Choose One):

1. Write a short journal entry for several (3-7) days and include phrases e kw Xws7ámeshqen about en-**esxchngí7n** (your feelings).
2. Create emotions flashcards (3-7) with, for example, a happy face and “Hílekw xchngí7n-sen” or a sad face and “Q’íles xchngí7n-sen.”
3. With a classmate, family member, or friend, record a short conversation (3-7 lines) e kw Xws7ámeshqen that includes phrases with the words **xchít** and **xchngí7n**.

Wí:k Ngós | Lánget í7 Lángnexw | 26 cheláw’ e kw Sxwán’elh

Week Four | Look and See | May 13

Learners will practice variations of the common verb root Láng- to describe seeing things.

Homework (Choose one):

1. Go to a public and/or natural place and write down what you are looking at, seeing, and/or watching e kw Xws7ámeshqen and using **lánget** or **lángnexw**. Try to write more than 5 sentences.
2. Go to a public and/or natural place and draw pictures of 3-6 things you see. Then, add captions e kw Xws7ámeshqen and using **lánget** or **lángnexw** that explain what you saw.
3. Go to a public and/or natural place and record audio or video of yourself speaking e kw Xws7ámeshqen and using **lánget** or **lángnexw** to describe what you are seeing.

Wí:k Lhq’áchs | S-tl’í7-s í7 S-xwetín-s | 11 cheláw’ e kw Penáxweng

Week Five | Like and Dislike | May 27

Learners will practice saying what they like and dislike.

Homework:

1. Travel around your house, neighborhood, or a store (or other public place) and write lists of what you like or don’t like using **Ne-s-tl’í7** or **Ne-s-xwetín**. Try to write at least 8 sentences total. You could write about objects, animals, people, the weather, or anything else you feel strongly about!
2. Travel around your house, neighborhood, or a store (or other public place) and take pictures or draw items you like or don’t like using **Ne-s-tl’í7** or **Ne-s-**

- xwetin**. Try to capture at least 8 items total. You could take pictures of/draw objects, animals, people (get permission first!), the weather, or anything else you feel strongly about!
- Travel around your house, neighborhood, or a store (or other public place) and record yourself telling items you like or don't like them using **Ne-s-tl'i7** or **Ne-s-xwetin**. Try to talk to at least 8 items total. You could take pictures of/draw objects, animals, people (either be nice or be silly!), the weather, or anything else you feel strongly about!

Wí:k T'xéng | U7 Hákw' kw Mékw' í7 u7 Néptel | 25 cheláw' e kw Penáxweng

Week Six | Review and Help | June 10

Learners will review the conversations held during the class, and time will be offered for any further questions, comments, or concerns with regards to the materials.

Homework (optional):

- Exit survey! Respond to the exit survey with your experiences in the class and what you think I should improve on for future courses.
- Practice these phrases! I'd love to hear you using them at General Council Weekend, Canoe Landing, Camp Samish, and in future XWS courses :)

The topics discussed in the course will also be determined by responses to the student survey, completed with registration.

Recommended and Supplementary Readings and Materials

Charles, Al, Richard A. Demers, & Elizabeth Bowman. *Introduction to the Lummi Language*. 1978, University of Washington. **UW, WWU**

Galloway, Brent D. *A Phonology, Morphology, and Classified Word List for the Samish Dialect of Straits Salish*. 1990, University of Ottawa. **W, UW, WWU, SL, SIN**

Kuipers, Aert H. *Salish Etymological Dictionary*. 2002, University of Montana. **W, UW, WWU, SVC, SINR**

Montler, Timothy. *Klallam Dictionary*. 2012, University of Washington. **S-I, UW, WWU, SVC, SIN**

Montler, Timothy. *Klallam Grammar*. 2015, University of Washington. **UW, WWU, SIN**

Montler, Timothy. *SENĆOŦEN: A Dictionary of the Saanich Language*. 2018, WSÁNEĆ School Board. <http://saanich.montler.net/SaanichDictionary-Edition.pdf> **UW, WWU, SIN**

Montler, Timothy. *SENĆOŦEN: A Grammar of the Saanich Language*. 2025, W̱SÁNEĆ School Board. <https://scalar.sencoten.org/sencoten-grammar/contents?path=index>

Richardson, Allan. *Nooksack Place Names: Geography, Culture, and Language*. 2011, University of British Columbia. **W, UW, SVC, SIN**

Thompson, M. Terry, & Steven M. Egesdal, eds. *Salish Myths and Legends: Our Peoples' Stories*. 2008. **S-I, B, UW, WWU, SVC, SL, SIN**

Library Systems Key:

Sno-Isle **S-I**

Burlington **B**

Whatcom County **W**

University of Washington **UW**

Western Washington University **WWU**

Skagit Valley College **SVC**

Samish Libby (Online) **SL**

Samish Indian Nation Library (Summit Park) **SIN**

Samish Indian Nation Library (Reference Only) **SINR**