

# Second annual Lushootseed Language Institute further strengthens Puyallup identity

By Matt Nagle

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The Puyallup Tribe's second annual Lushootseed Language Institute (LLI) wrapped up on Aug. 11 following two weeks of full immersion classes held at the University of Washington-Tacoma. Presented by UWT and the Puyallup Tribal Language Program, LLI welcomed predominately Native students from many tribes – Puyallup, Nisqually, Snoqualmie, Suquamish, Sauk Suiattle, Tulalip, Quileute, Salish and Jicarilla Apache, in addition to Chief Leschi School's staff.

It was a team effort to bring the second LLI to life, combining the talents of UWT Assistant Professor of American Indian Studies Danica Miller with Puyallup Tribal Language Program staff Zalmai Zahir, Lushootseed language consultant; Amber Hayward, Language Program director; Chris Duenas, media/web developer; and Language Instructor Archie Cantrell.

The Language staff worked the whole year to produce Lushootseed class content to present the lesson units completely in Lushootseed, with Zalmai Zahir overseeing the Language Program staff in the creation of immersion units for LLI. The Language staff was also very intentional about how they put together the schedule for this year's LLI, taking into consideration student comments from last year, and staff observations, to create a healthy, positive and loving environment to encourage language use.

Archie Cantrell presented the "About Lushootseed" unit and a full two weeks of pronunciation for beginning students in an immersion setting. With his history of teaching the language to young students at Chief Leschi, he said it was refreshing to work with adults. "At the end they said they were sad that it was over," he said of his adult students on the last day of classes.

Archie is very pleased with how LLI went this year. "It was great to see so many Puyallups there," he said. "I feel like this year we focused on things people could actually use as opposed to focusing on things like grammar."

Archie explained that every day of class the students spent eight hours fully immersed in the Lushootseed language through a variety of subjects to get them hearing and using the language, from reciting the Lushootseed alphabet to speaking their way through everyday tasks, like making coffee, or frying an egg. By establishing such domains, or "language nests," in their homes, areas like the bathroom and laundry room become places where the students could self-narrate their way through brushing their teeth or putting in a load to wash while speaking only Lushootseed in a way that allows the learners to continue developing their knowledge and use of the language outside of the classroom. Amber Hayward and Chris Duenas taught two weeks of bathroom immersion content for students that wanted to establish a bathroom language nest in their home. Likewise, Archie Cantrell and Zalmai Zahir presented in the same manner for the kitchen immersion content for students wanting to establish a kitchen language nest.

Chris Duenas also presented units on common phrases, playing cards, and two weeks of video production in Lushootseed. Amber Hayward presented a one-week unit on the history of the Cushman Boarding School and Hospital in full immersion. Zalmai Zahir presented Lushootseed immersion units on language revitalization, how to play sláhal (bone games) two weeks of grammar for intermediate speakers, two weeks of conversation, student translations and the Little Silver Salmon story told by Snoqualmie elder Earnest Barr.

Danica Miller facilitated lectures and discussions with students about Puyallup Tribal sovereignty and weekly student reflections. "We were astounded at how quickly new speakers were conversing in Lushootseed," she said. "It's so beautiful to see the Lushootseed speaking community grow. This year was so successful that I can't imagine how we will improve upon it."

Archie Cantrell said that this year the language staff took on a lot of the teaching duties, which brought a new and important quality to the institute. "We're at the point now as a staff that we can take on a lot of the course ourselves and that really benefitted (the students). Instead of one person teaching, we had five people, and we were able to help each student more directly."

Puyallup Tribal Council members visited the class to witness for themselves the great things that were happening. David



PHOTO BY MATT NAGLE

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"You folks will spread these lessons throughout our community, with our children, with our elders and encourage more (tribal members) to speak the language," David Bean said. "It really warms our hearts to hear our language and see it brought back to life. I get to tell these stories when I interact with non-Natives and members of Congress and other state and local government leaders. I tell them how our way of life was taken from us, how or grandparents and great-grandparents were taken from their homes and our way of life was taken and we're working very hard to bring it back to life. Through lessons like these, we're going to bring it back strong. Our goal is for the entire community, all of our kids, to speak the language and hold conversations."

Annette Bryan said it does her heart good whenever she hears the language spoken in Tribal Council chambers and Tribal departments.

"I am very proud of the progress our Tribe and its members are making toward reclaiming our language. The immersion class is unique because students are only allowed to speak Lushootseed during the two-week course. It is a very emotional journey because we are taking back something that our grandparents were beaten for in boarding schools. I am so grateful to our Language Department staff, Dr. Danica Miller at UWT, and each of our tribal members who had a part in this. We are truly blessed!"

The two-week immersion included teaching methods that students really enjoyed, like drumming and singing Lushootseed songs and playing bone games/sláhal. This gave students the confidence to sing and drum when they might not have had the opportunity to do so. For student Ty Satiacum (Puyallup Tribe) this was his first time to pick up a drum and sing with a group. He said it sparked something in him such that he has brought drumming and singing into his home to share with his family.

"My kids look forward to me coming home so we can sit and drum and sing some songs in the language," he said, as he and his family had just done the night before at a family barbecue. "The Language Department did a fantastic job of creating the curriculum. They kept it interesting and the instructors were very knowledgeable and presented very well. They utilized the feedback of the prior class (LLI 2016) to make improvements on this class and my experience with the class was amazing."

The same holds true for student Michael Sisson, a Puyallup tribal veteran whose goal it is to confidently, and correctly, greet canoes in Lushootseed as they arrive in Puyallup territory when the Tribe hosts next year's Canoe Journey.

"I want to be able to welcome them in the proper language and dialect as well because Tulalip would be welcomed with slightly different words than Squaxin

Island, for example, because there are two different dialects, which is one of the things that we learned in the class. There's northern Lushootseed and southern Lushootseed. We speak the southern dialect and Tulalip would speak the northern as well as the tribes further up north."

Michael Sisson is well known in the tribal community for his selflessness in giving back every chance he gets. Attending LLI provided him with one more way to do so.

"It's really part of me because I'm Puyallup and mastering it even at a beginning level would be such an accomplishment, such a way to give back to the Tribe, to be fluent enough to speak Lushootseed at gatherings, at Veterans Committee meetings... I don't know what Creator has in store for me, but I want to be prepared and I feel that learning this language is going to prepare me for whatever it is that he has in store. All the things I do as a veteran is to give back, whether it's to a stranger, to another tribe or our Tribe. This language is going to give me the opportunity to do that more and it feels good to know that."

Guest speakers were another highlight of the class. Throughout the two weeks, students heard from numerous guest speakers about their journey with tribal language, language upbringing and usage. Jill LaPointe (Upper Skagit) spoke about her grandmother, Vi Hilbert, and her life work with the Lushootseed language. Joana Jansen spoke about Yakama tribal elder Virginia Beavert and her efforts to keep the Itchishkiin language going for future generations. Tachini Pete (Salish/Navajo) spoke about his acquisition of the Salish language and building speakers in his community. Anita Oldbull (Crow), Puyallup Tribal Administrator, spoke about growing up with Crow as her first language and how her language use

changed throughout her life. Muckleshoot tribal elder Gilbert "Hoagie" King George spoke about growing up with Lushootseed and other life experiences.

Students also worked on Lushootseed videos created through the Lushootseed video production course under the guidance of Chris Duenas. The students created approximately 80 Lushootseed videos that were uploaded to the LLI YouTube account, which gives the Lushootseed speaking community more media to view. As the Language Program wants to track and document the progress made with students taking the course and their language progression, four students volunteered to participate in a video diary of their language use. These four students made five-minute video segments speaking the Lushootseed language and as the time continued through each week, the speakers progressed in their Lushootseed speaking abilities.

During the two weeks, students prepared themselves for student presentations that were held on the last day of class, enabling them to showcase the Lushootseed they incorporated in their lives.

The last day of student presentations was full of laughter, tears and gratefulness toward each person that participated in this year's Lushootseed Language Institute. Students expressed heartfelt thanks for the past two weeks of learning and relationship building.

Plans are already being laid for LLI 3 in 2018. "University of Washington-Tacoma and the BEST grant (funded by the Puyallup Tribe) continue to enthusiastically support the work of the Lushootseed Language Institute," Danica Miller said, "and we are very pleased to announce that LLI has been given preliminary approval for summer 2018. Dates have not yet been confirmed but we do know that the LLI will take place after Canoe Journey."

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PCCNG is in need of a part time and full time Web Developer.

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Salary is negotiable. Please send all resumes to [matt@tacomaweekly.com](mailto:matt@tacomaweekly.com).