

# **Conversational Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax) Audio Glossary**

**by  
Victoria Mckoy**

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## Declaration of Committee

**Name:** Victoria Mckoy

**Degree:** Master of Arts (Linguistics)

**Title:** Conversational Shm' algyack (Sm'algyax) Audio Glossary

**Committee:** **Chair: Heather Bliss**  
Lecturer, Linguistics

**Marianne Ignace**  
Supervisor  
Professor, Linguistics

**Thomas Perry**  
Committee Member  
Associate Professor, Linguistics

## **Abstract**

For my project I chose to make a Conversational Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax) Audio Glossary. In our traditional territories of British Columbia, we have less than one hundred speakers of Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax), the Coast Tsimshian (Ts'msyen) language, remaining. In the United States we have less than three first language speakers left. In my hometown of Ketchikan, Alaska we recently lost our last fluent first language speaking elder, John Reece. In my quest to empower our language learners I wanted to make use of widely accessible material, where everyone would be able to hear, learn, and speak our traditional language. My final project creates a Conversational Beginning Glossary of Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax), assembled around a variety of common beginner level topics, and consisting of text in both the New Metlakatla Shm'algyack orthography, and the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority orthography, supported by a translation and audio recording. This project was created utilizing Common Framework for Language Proficiency (CFLP) recordings from the Ketchikan Indian Community website. The glossary provides foundation that is needed to support the Shm'algyack language so it may not only survive, but will thrive and grow with future generations of speakers.

**Keywords:** Shm'algyack; Sm'algyax; Tsimshian language; Audio glossary

## **Dedication**

To my mother – Alice Modig Halimoack (1954-2014),

whose love for her children, grandchildren,

and love for our language inspired the writing of my thesis.

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank my Shm'algyack teachers, Tsimshian Elder Madeeg (John Reece), Shiggoap (Alfie Price), Huk Yuunsk (David Lang), Ah'lidaaw (Terri Burr), Donna May Roberts, Dr. Mique'l Dangeli, and da'ash Nancy Barns. My teachers have spent a large part of their lives teaching me our traditional language. Not only did they teach me our language using correct pronunciation, but I was also taught how to uphold myself as an Indigenous Tsimshian woman. While learning my language, I have found peace and beauty in my life.

Lu'kwil N'doyackshim.

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## List of Acronyms

SFU	Simon Fraser University
CFLP	Common Framework for Language Proficiency
ISO	International Standard for language codes
FPCC	First Peoples Cultural Council
US	United States



## Glossary

Adaawck/adaawx	Storytelling
Gganhaada/Ganhada	Raven clan
Gitlan tribe/	people of two passing canoes
Naanaa	grandmother - in Sm'algyax grandmother (term of address) in Xaad Kil (Haida)
nts'i'its	frog
Shm'algyack/Sm'algyax	The language of the Tsimshian people

# Chapter 1. Introduction

Ggoadm 'Teebn, dee waayu.

Ganhada dee hokshgu.

Halimoack, waan a dee noayu.

Gisshashgan dee will dsoacku.

In my traditional language of Shm'algyack, I stated my traditional Tsimshian name, clan, my mother's Tsimshian name, and where I currently live. My great-grandmother Lizzy Eaton from the Gitlan tribe (people of two passing canoes), house of the gganaow (frog), gganhaada (raven clan). She married James Peele of Kasaan, Alaska September 18th, 1913, who was the son of Chief Saanaxeit aka Wilson S. Peele of New Kasaan, Alaska. Chief Saanaxeit died 18th of January 1912, New Kasaan, Alaska. Lizzy and James had two surviving children Sara Peele (my grandmother) and Victor Peele (the man I was named after). My late Shm'algyack teacher John Reese (99-year-old elder) was good friends with my beeb (uncle) Victor Peele. As a descendent of the Tsimshian people and a speaker of Shm'algyack I would like to create awareness of our indigenous language.

My Nana (grandmother) was a significant part of my development into a native woman. My grandmother Sara Peele was removed from her home at the age of five years old. When asked why she did not speak her native language she responded that she once did when she was younger. In school she was not allowed to speak her native language. She also reported that she previously had a sister name Jessie Peele who died at residential school. At residential school, my grandmother gave birth to twins. One of the babies died and the other was sent home to family. Both Jessie and the baby are buried in unmarked graves at the school. My grandmother did not graduate from high school and later got her General Education Diploma in her late 50's.

When my grandmother Sara Rose Peele, Tsimshian matriarch of the Raven clan, house of the Frog, passed away in July 2012, I felt as though I lost apart of myself. I needed something to fill the void of losing such a big part of my culture. Shortly after losing my grandmother my mother Alice Modig became ill. My mother was sick with

Stomach Cancer at the time. Her wish was for her children to speak our Indigenous language at home. At the time I did not think it was possible. We as a family, my mother's six children and grandchildren, began taking language classes with Tsimshian language teacher Terri Burr. My son King Devin was born one day before my mother's passing. I have raised him to speak our indigenous language before English. His first language is Shm'alyack, not English. When my son King Devin was a newborn baby, I knew hundreds of vocabulary words. But I did not understand my Elder when he spoke Shm'alyack. After spending many hours with my elder every day, my comprehension vastly increased. Prior to my Elder John Reece's passing we could speak in our language for over an hour.

In the winter of 2013, I began studying the Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax) language with Terri Burr and Elder John Reese. Previously, I worked as a language apprentice at Ketchikan Indian Community and taught Beginning Shm'algyack at Ketchikan High School. In the Fall of 2020, I was selected to be one of two Tsimshian language scholars with the Pathways Scholars Program through Sealaska Heritage Institute. It provides a three-year full scholarship paying tuition and housing at the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau. The Pathways Scholars program prepares students to become teachers of Indigenous languages in Southeast Alaska. When I started the Sealaska Pathways program, I was only familiar with the Alaskan Writing system. As part of our immersion's sessions in the Pathways program, scholars were fortunate to work with Dr Dangel. Through our immersion session she taught me how to read and write in the Dunn writing system. She also was able to get Dr Anderson to conduct a two-week grammar intensive. This grammar intensive workshop included fluent speaking Elders Velna Nelson and Bee Robinson.

Through learning my traditional language, I have been very fortunate to work with such educated passionate teachers. My late elder Madeeg (John Reece) was the last fluent first language speaker in Ketchikan, Alaska, my hometown. Shiggoap (Alfie Price) has been leading the Juneau Language Shm'algyack learners' group along with Huk Yuunsk (David Lang) and da'ash Nancy Barns, for the past seven years. Ah'lidaaw (Terri Burr) has been working on language for over fifteen years, her first teacher was her mother. After her mother passed, she was taught by three elders in the Ketchikan area, Girdy Johnson (passed), Wilber Reece (passed), and John Reece. Dr. Miquel D'angeli, has been teaching for over twenty years on the Metlakatla Reserve as well as

in our traditional Tsimshian territories of British Columbia. Donna May has been working on the Shm'algyack language for more than thirty years and has recently offered an online class through the University of Alaska Southeast. I have been very fortunate to be able to work with such loving dedicated teachers.

## **Chapter 2. Reasons for the decline of Shm'alyack**

Between the late 1800s and into the 1990s throughout Canada and the United States, many indigenous children were taken from their homes and forced into Indian residential schools (Canada) or boarding schools (US) enforced by the state and run by religious denominations. The boarding school era lasted from the years 1860-1978 in the United States, where Alaskan Indigenous children were sent to Mount Edgecumbe High School in Sitka, Alaska, Sheldon Jackson College in Sitka, or Wrangell Institute. In British Columbia "Death by Civilization" was published 03/08/2019 by Mary Pember. In these schools' children were often tortured if they spoke their traditional language. This quote Sir John A. Macdonald was known as "Take the Indian out of the child." Hearing language from parents was a vital part of teaching one's indigenous language. Most adults would not teach their children to speak in fear they would be subject to physical punishment or humiliation.

In the United States in the years 2004 - 2005 qualitative research (interviews) and surveys were conducted with residential-boarding school survivors. In the report "Thirty Years Later: The Long-term Effect of Boarding Schools on Alaska Natives and their Communities" (Sharp and Hirshberg 2005), provide detailed information of the Alaskan Boarding -Residential School experience based on interviews with 62 survivors. The research discusses the experiences of many students who attended boarding schools. Although, the project was not able to reach several rural areas, and the authors refer to a good number of survivors having died by suicide in the 1970s, I believe that the research did their best to cover sensitive topics. Many of the participants talked about abuse that they personally suffered at these schools. Sexual and physical abuse were common occurrences in the students who were taken from their homes at a young age. Unfortunately, there has not been any reconciliation for the students who suffered abuse. This project was one of the few papers that has documented the history from the students' perspective.

The students often talked about how they coped with the abuse as grown-ups using alcohol or other drugs to hide the pain. Sadly, many of my own relatives suffer from alcoholism or drug abuse coping with their own childhood trauma. "The goal of many educators at the time of mandatory boarding schools was to assimilate people of

different cultures and ethnicities into the dominant culture. This cost many students not only the loss of their language, but also their culture and identity “(Hirshberg & Sharp, 2005). It wasn’t until the year 1976 that the state of Alaska decided to build schools in rural communities with 8 or more school age children.

Although in many cases there were terrible life-long effects, in some cases the students mentioned positive outcomes coming from small communities. In my experience I have heard both good and bad stories documented by Alaska Native elders. Some of the good experiences cited by Sharp and Hirshberg included students mentioning about going to schools that had high expectations of the students; educators and other school personnel who developed positive personal relationships with students; individualized support for students who were struggling; extracurricular activities, and in some cases, discipline and structure that was supportive, not punitive. However, Sharp and Hirshberg’s report also tells us of instances of physical and sexual abuse, especially at the Wrangell institute (Sharp and Hirshberg, 2005: 11). Here, children were often beaten for speaking their native language. These children that were beaten for speaking their native language often did not pass their language down to their children or grandchildren. I have seen many cases where past students at boarding schools did not speak to their children or grandchildren in their traditional language.

## Chapter 3. Tsimshian (Ts'msyen) Nation Overview

Tsimshian territory includes the northwestern portion of the British Columbia coast, and it contains the upper Skeena River and watershed, and part of the Nass River watershed. The Metlakatla, Alaska reserve is the only reservation in the State of Alaska. The Tsimshian people are extremely fortunate to hold this land. Between the 1860s and 1890s, 800s Tsimshian people migrated from their community of Metlakatla, BC to form the community of New Metlakatla, Alaska. traditional territory of British Columbia to Alaska. This migration was under the guidance of Minister William Duncan. The first migration of the controversial minister William Duncan and the Tsimshian occurred in the year 1862 when Duncan moved fifty converted Tsimshian to Metlakatla from (Askren, 2006.). The converted Tsimshian were expected to not practice their Tsimshian culture once converting. Metlakatla was designed to be self-sufficient Duncan created, (e.g., sawmill, soap factory, furniture factory, blacksmith shop, trading post, salmon cannery) (Askren, 2006). These establishments were operated mainly by the Tsimshian people. The Tsimshian who left their ancestral homelands did so for complex and rational reasons that had little to do with the will or whims of "whites," (Askren, 2006).

In the year 1897 additional Tsimshian people migrated to Annette Island under the guidance of William Duncan lay minister. "Duncan was likely one of British Columbia's best known and most ~~well~~ missionaries to First Nations" (Askren, 2006). My great-grandmother Lizzy Eaton was one of these 800 Tsimshian who traveled to Metlakatla, Alaska, with four of her sisters and their parents. At the time of the migration, she was four years old.

According to the American published perspective (Askren 2006) on the Tsimshian migration under Duncan, the Tsimshian people who left (Old) Metlakatla were looking for land that they could freely worship on. The Americans were told that the Tsimshian could not freely go to church in British Columbia and were seeking refuge. I believe the Tsimshian people made a wise decision moving to Metlakatla, Alaska and establishing the only Alaska Reserve.

In the Tsimshian culture our descendants follow their mother's bloodline, which is based on the social order and kinship of a matrilineal society. This matrilineal society includes crest group, clan, house, land, waterways, fishing, hunting grounds, and adaawck/adaawx (storytelling). It is said that the Tsimshian house a descendant is born into may be the most important aspect of relationships and kinship terms (Askren, 2006.)

There are four crests in the Tsimshian society which include Raven, Eagle, Killer-whale, and Wolf.

The spoken language for the Tsimshian people is known as Shm'alyack/ Sm'algyax, which translates to Shm-true alyack-talk= "true talk." Together with the Nisg'a-Gitksan language spoken upriver on the Skeena and Nass Rivers in what are now the Nisga'a and Gitksan (Gitxsan) Nations in British Columbia, Coast Tsimshian or Sm'algyax is part of the Tsimshianic language family. Currently there are two different variations or dialects of Coast Tsimshian (Shm'algyack/Sm'algyax): They include language (Seguin, 1990.) They include Coast Tsimshian and Sgüüxs, Southern Tsimshian spoken on the BC Island of Klemtu, although its last speaker passed away in 2013 (Dunn, Mulder, Anderson, Anderson and Ignace, Davis, etc.).

The variation of (Shm'algyack/Sm'algyax) spoken in New Metlakatla is thus considered the same or closely related to the variation spoken in the BC Ts'msyen communities, although small variations in pronunciation exist.



## Chapter 4. The current state of Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax) Language

According to the International Standard for coding languages – whose purpose is to establish internationally recognized codes for all languages in the world and their language families - the Tsimshian language ( ) is internationally referred to as ISO 639-3 Code (Codes for the representation of names of languages)

According to the most recent report (FPCC 2022) by the British Columbia, Canada First Peoples Cultural Council, in Canada there are 110 L1 speakers or users.). According to the 2016 Canada Census, there are 275 mother tongue speakers in Canada, 3 in the United States (2016 Canada Census, 2020). The information provided the 2016 Canada Census does not accurately reflect the true number of L1 or “birth speakers”, since it is based on self reporting of language use and mother-tongue (M. Ignace personal communication August 2022). In addition, many elders have passed away since 2016. However, as both the Canada Census report and the data from the BC First Peoples' Cultural Council Report note, there is a growing number of L2 learners and users in both BC and Alaska. Furthermore, a correct number of second language speakers have not been accounted for in any current data or F1 children's speakers who are being raised to speak Shm'algyack by their F2 parents, nor is the proficiency of these emerging speakers of (Shm'algyack/Sm'algyax).

According to figures reported by Dr. Miquel D'Angeli, a Sm'algyax teacher and language activist, in British Columbia, Canada, there are around 50 fluent Sm'algyax speaking elders, but only 15 are actively helping with revitalization efforts (Dr. Mique'l Dangeli, 2018). Within Southeast Alaska, there are only six Shm'algyack fluent speakers -- five living in Metlakatla (Tsimshian reservation) all over the age of 60 (Harding-Laman, 2018). Of these five, three remain in 2022.

Although the statistics are somewhat discouraging there is hope to revive our language.

Currently there are many people working on language revitalization throughout Alaska and Canada. During the month of January there were over thirty-seven online

Tsimshian language classes taught. Below is a table of the classes taught in January 2022.

**Table 1. Shm'algyack classes taught in January 2022**

Saturday January 1, 2022	1. Juneau Language Learners Shm'algyack Group
Sunday January 2, 2022	2. Sunday Sm'algyax dii ada kopii 3. Raising Sm'algyax
Monday January 3, 2022	No classes
Tuesday January 4, 2022	4. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Intermediate Shm'algyack class.
Wednesday January 5, 2022	No classes
Thursday January 6, 2022	5. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Intermediate Shm'algyack class.
Friday January 7, 2022	No classes
Saturday January 8, 2022	6. Juneau Language Learners Shm'algyack Group
Sunday January 9, 2022	7. Sunday Sm'algyax dii ada kopii 8. Raising Sm'algyax
Monday January 10, 2022	9. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Beginning Shm'algyack class. 10. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Advanced II Shm'algyack class.
Tuesday January 11, 2022	11. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Intermediate Shm'algyack class.
Wednesday January 12, 2022	12. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Beginning Shm'algyack class. 13. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Advanced II Shm'algyack class.
Thursday January 13, 2022	14. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Intermediate Shm'algyack class.
Friday January 14, 2022	15. Nigyooks Sm'algyax
Saturday January 15, 2022	16. Juneau Language Learners Shm'algyack Group
Sunday January 16, 2022	17. Sunday Sm'algyax dii ada kopii 18. Raising Sm'algyax

Monday January 17, 2022	Martin Luther King Day
Tuesday January 18, 2022	19. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Intermediate Shm'algyack class.
Wednesday January 19, 2022	20. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Beginning Shm'algyack class. 21. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Advanced II Shm'algyack class.
Thursday January 20, 2022	22. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Intermediate Shm'algyack class.
Friday January 21, 2022	23. Nigyooks Sm'algyax
Saturday January 22, 2022	24. Juneau Language Learners Shm'algyack Group
Sunday January 23, 2022	25. Sunday Sm'algyax dii ada kopii 26. Raising Sm'algyax
Monday January 24, 2022	27. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Beginning Shm'algyack class. 28. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Advanced II Shm'algyack class.
Tuesday January 25, 2022	29. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Intermediate Shm'algyack class.
Wednesday January 26, 2022	30. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Beginning Shm'algyack class. 31. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Advanced II Shm'algyack class.
Thursday January 27, 2022	32. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Intermediate Shm'algyack class.
Friday January 28, 2022	33. Nigyooks Sm'algyax
Saturday January 29, 2022	34. Juneau Language Learners Shm'algyack Group
Sunday January 30, 2022	35. Sunday Sm'algyax dii ada kopii 36. Raising Sm'algyax
Monday January 31, 2022	37. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Beginning Shm'algyack class. 38. Donna Mays Shm'algyack Advanced II Shm'algyack class.

When I started this project there were only two Shm'algyack teachers In Ketchikan, Alaska Terri Burr 55, and late Tsimshian elder John Reece 99. Unfortunately, my elder John Reece passed on October 28, 2021. Furthermore, in the

spring of 2014, John Reese's brother, Wilber Reese passed. Working with my Elder John Reese, I recall him mentioning that he did not go to boarding school. He learned Shm'alyack language through two women he worked with at in the cannery and his parents. My Elder once said, he does not believe that the Shm'alyack language has any peculiar sounds, he states the sounds were natural growing up.

## Chapter 5. Research on Shm'algyack-Sm'algyax

Many studies have been done on the Tsimshian languages by linguists and anthropologists since the late 1800s. The first known documentation of the language was a wordlist by The Hudson Bay Company in the (Mulder, 1994.)

Missionaries were also known to document Bible verses and songs in the Shm'algyack/Sm'algyax language beginning in the 1860s and continuing the early 1900s. One of the most recognized missionaries to document the language was William Duncan, a lay missionary. As noted above, Duncan was best known for leading over 800 Tsimshian people to Metlakatla, Alaska. He translated Bible verses and songs into the Shm'algyack/Sm'algyax language (Askren, 2006.)

Another famous scholar was Franz Boas, who gathered information from Henry Wellington Tate (circa 1860-1914) a full-blooded Tsimshian. His study "The Tsimshian Indian Language", part of the *Handbook of North American Languages* he edited, was created in 1911, and it involved the interpretation of phonetics, the sound system, and an overview of the grammar, including suffixes, connectives and of syntax. In the year 1912 another article, "The Tsimshian Relationship System" (Boas 2012) was based on Boas' previous work. Although Ralph Maud (2000), refutes Boas' work on myth and narrative work in his book, *Transmission difficulties: Franz Boas and Tsimshian mythology*, I believe the Tsimshian stories that were documented by Tate and Boas, are useful, and his grammatical materials continue to be useful.

Another person who did impressive work on the Tsimshian language and culture was Viola Garfield. This work included her thesis on "Change in Marriage Customs of the Tsimshian" (1931) and the article "Tsimshian Clan and Society" (1939). Garfield was best known for her work as a schoolteacher in Metlakatla, Alaska. The children in Garfield's' classroom were allowed to speak their native language. "Despite the superintendent's injunction, she refused to punish students for speaking Shm'algyack. Garfield was the only anthropologist who took an active interest in the continuation of Tsimshian practices in our community" (Askren, 2006). It is said that Garfield was adopted into the Tsimshian Eagle Clan and given a traditional name (Miller, 1997).

Between the years of 1940-1969 no linguistic work was published on the Coast Tsimshian language (Mulder, 1988) In the year of 1970 a group of Elders from Metlakatla, Alaska began creating a new orthography. The Elders who had a foresight to save the language included, Ira Booth, Lillian Buchert, Frances Duncan Bernard Guthrie, Solomon Guthrie, Russell Hayward, Harold Hudson, and Charles Ryan. The Elders from Metlakatla, Alaska were concerned the next generations would have a difficult time learning their indigenous language using a different orthography.

Another scholar who worked on the Tsimshian language was John Dunn, a linguist from the United States, did most of his fieldwork in the traditional territories of Prince Rupert and Hartley Bay. In the year 1979 Dunn created a one hundred and forty-five-page Coast Tsimshian dictionary, along with *A Reference Grammar for the Coast Tsimshian Language*, a grammar of the language (Dunn, 1979). Aside from a large amount of work on morphology and work on connectives, his research with the Tsimshian people analysed the historical changes in morphological markings and syntax (Mulder, 1994.)

Dr. Margaret Seguin Anderson, who is a member by marriage to the late Clarence Anderson in the Hartley Bay community, has worked on the Tsimshian language for forty years. She is most widely recognized for her field work in Hartley Bay documenting feasting and potlach protocol. Some of her previous work include "Tsimshian" (editor, "Interpretive Contexts for Traditional and Current Coast Tsimshian Feast," "Potlatch at Gitsegukla" Margaret Seguin & Marjorie Halpin (editors.)

Anderson started creating curriculum beginning Conversational Sm'algyax Book Lexicon, language and culture activities for grades three-five. Dr. Anderson also created an Alphabet Colouring Book of the Tsimshian language. Shortly after Dr. Anderson published her work, The British Columbia Ministry of education made a policy to support the preservation of native languages with public schools to teach language (Mulder, 1994.)

Most recently Dr. Anderson has worked with Tsimshian Elders creating an online talking dictionary, twenty modules of Syntax and serves as Department head at the University of UNBC. Currently UNBC has a ground-breaking language program teaching Coast Tsimshian. In 2008, Anderson and Dr. Marianne Ignace together with elders-

speakers and the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Society, created an extensive practical grammar of Sm'algyax, titled *Visible Grammar: Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Grammar Resources, Twenty User-Friendly Modules on Key Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Structures* (Anderson and Ignace, 2008).

Jean Mulder's fieldwork between 1979 and 1994 further documents the Shm'algyack/Sm'algyax language in our Tsimshian Territories. Her main work on the Tsimshian-Sm'algyax publication was *Ergativity in Coast Tsimshian* (Sm'algyax.), 1994. Other accomplishments included a complete structural analysis of transcription, and text; as well as 20 songs and dances of the Coast Tsimshian People. She referred to his findings of the Coast Tsimshian dialect. Mulder describes in detail prior work by Dunn, Garfield, Tate, and other Linguistics who work on the Tsimshian Language.

Ball-Dum translating to We will try created by Tony and Donna May Roberts in the year 1994. This project was completed by Shu Gyena and her husband Tony. This English to Shm'algyack dictionary includes files on CD's that give pronunciations of words and phrases.

Dr. Miquel D'Angeli (formerly Askren), a Ts'msyen researcher and language activist, wrote in 2006 "From Negative to Positive B.A Haldane, Nineteenth Century Tsimshian Photographer" Miquel gives an Indigenous perspective on research. Askren main objective for her dissertation was to challenge and dispute this colonial narrative by bringing to light a counter-narrative that was captured through the life and photographic lens of our people (Askren, 2006). Askren states in her writing that she wrote this thesis for the Tsimshian students. This writing as been extremely important in my language work and building a connection to the Tsimshian people.

Donna May Roberts' 2009 "Dictionary of Shm'algyack". This dictionary has an estimate of over 2000 words used in everyday conversations as well as the same translations English to Shm'algyack. The sentence examples listed under the Shm'algyack translations were composed by Tsimshian Elders of Metlakatla, Alaska.

Terri Burrs 2019 work "Kam Goahl Wan" Is an advanced Shm'algyack curriculum taught by a dissented of the Tsimshian people. "Kam Goahl Wan", gives a highly appreciated view from culture to language using our history.

## Chapter 6. The Development of the Conversational Glossary

This Conversational Glossary will offer subjects taught in a Beginning Conversational class. Data was collected from pre-existing resources of the Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax) language. Which include phonetics, phonology, unique sounds only found in Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax). Topics will consist of classroom direction, greetings and leave taking, clothing, objects in a room, family terms, household objects, and abstract numbers. These topics allow the learner to acquire useful nouns and phrases building the learners vocabulary. Learners will be able to remember these phrases and use them in everyday classroom conversation. These subjects require little to no knowledge of the complex grammar of Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax). The number of entries (slides) for each topic; greetings 15, classroom direction 15, clothing 20, objects in the room 36, family 18, household objects 36, animals 10, abstract numbers 20, and places around town 9. Each entry gives learners the opportunity to listen, speak and read in everyday Conversational Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax). I have adapted each subject into novice level entries.

Each entry contains lexicon giving each learner the ability to easily read Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax). The first line contains lexicon in written Alaskan orthography. The second line contains the entry in the Dunn orthography. The third line includes the source, first the speaker of the recording and then the source of the entry. The fourth line indicates the parts of speech in the phrase. The fifth line gives the English translation of the entry. Line number seven includes the file reference number for the audio file. Finally, line eight gives the last date the entry was recorded.

**Table 2. Example of Conversational Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax) Audio Glossary Slide**

<p>\lx Alaskan</p>	<p>bilaan</p>
<p>\lx Dunn</p>	<p>bilaan</p>



<b>\so</b>	<b>July 3, 2019 J. Reese W. Reese, 2017,</b>
<b>\ps</b>	<b>Common noun- bilaan</b>
<b>\ge</b>	<b>belt</b>
<b>\sd</b>	<b>Clothing</b>
<b>\snd</b>	<b>E-sm-n-V4-1</b>
<b>\dt</b>	<b>April 07, 2020</b>

The sequence I have chosen will help learners develop basic listening, speaking, and reading skills. By listening and reviewing the audio recording by fluent Shm'algyack Elders. Learners will improve their listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, Learners who use my Conversational Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax) Audio Glossary can improve their ability to understand and speak Shm'algyack. Originally my project started as a word document, after the Covid-19 pandemic online classes for Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax) increased. PowerPoint slides were easier to conduct an online language class. With the slides I was able to show the entire table on one slide which included the audio. However, when my work is published on the Sealaska Heritage Institute website it will be under their new language education section in a different format.

The main objective for my project is to utilize categories needed in everyday conversations. This project was created by utilizing Common Framework for Language Proficiency CFLP recordings on the Ketchikan Indian Community website. The Common Framework for Language method is primarily used as a teaching method designed to increase vocabulary in short periods of time. In the year 2010 Ketchikan Indian Community recorded all three languages of Southeast Alaska which include Tlingit, Xaadkill and Shm'algyack. The speakers of the Shm'algyack recordings are John Reece, late Wilber Reece, and Terri Burr. John and Wilber Reece were of the

Lack'shgeeg (Eagle) clan, a child of the Lackgyiboo (Wolf) clan, and of the Gishpacklo'ots house, the People of the Elderberries.

My teacher John was born in his dad's fish camp, Dsam ggaloash, and raised both in Ketchikan and Metlakatla. His mother was Alice Johnson, and his father was Hebert Reese, Jr. Everyone he grew up around – brothers, parents, other family members, and community members – spoke Sm'algyax when he was growing up.

The entire collection of the Shm'algyack (Sm'algyax) CFLP recordings consists subjects in the following: Identity Positive Statement, Identity Negative Statements, Identity of Yes, No Questions, Content questions Positive Statement, Negative Statement, Number and Quality Positive Statements, Quality Negative Statement, Location Positive Statements, Negative Statements, Types of people, place names natural element, fruits, and vegetables. In the future I would like to utilize all categories in the recording collection. The recordings were once available on The Ketchikan Indian Community website in all three languages of Tlingit, Xaadkill, and Sm'algyax. In the future I would like to work on the Xaadkill recordings that were recorded by Ben Younge and his grandfather.

My Conversational audio glossary was first introduced in The Juneau Shm'algyack language learners' group. The Juneau language learners group offers a three-hour language learning session. In the first hour a beginning session is offered to new speakers of Shm'algyack . In the year 2021 I introduced my Audio glossary; in my session I was told it was nice to have both orthographies side by side. Many speakers in the Tsimshian nation can read and write in both orthographies and utilize both systems. Additionally, most learners can increase the number of teachers and resources if they know both writing systems. With the current state of Shm'algyack it is important to have access to as many teachers as possible.

In most cases participants mentioned that they like to hear Shm'algyack from an elder speaker. I have also shared my audio glossary with my Sealaska Language Cohort in our language revitalization classes. I was told that having the elder speaker was a nice touch, ( at the time my elder John Reese was still alive).

Prior to my elders passing I was able to share my audio glossary with him. However, when I shared the audio with John, I did not realize that he would get emotional hearing his brother. He held out his hand towards the speaker saying Weku ( my brother).

He then told me it was good to hear his brother because he had not heard his voice in years.

It was important to me to use only New Metlakatla speakers because John Reese was my Shm'algyack teacher for so many years. There are small versions in the Alaskan dialect and the BC, the most noticeable one would be the SH and S. Every morning I would go up to his apartment to learn Shm'algyack. In each language session he made sure that I had the pronunciation correct. He would say Ggoadm 'Teebn you need to say it correctly so everyone will understand you in Canada.

After my elder passed I have used the audio glossary to teach my family every Tuesday and Thursday. For the past year I have been teaching 30 of my clan members our traditional language. In most cases I will play the audio in our class time and each person will repeat the vocabulary word. This has been an awesome teaching method because I am still learning myself and do not always have correct pronunciation.

When I started my audio glossary I showed my work to my elder Donna May, she gave me suggestions on how to proceed with my work. One of her suggestions was that if I have the Alaska alphabet, I need to add the Dunn, because we as Tsimshian's recognize both writing systems.

## Chapter 7. Orthographies and Orthographic Preferences

My Final Master's Project focuses on orthography preference but will offer both orthographies used by the Tsimshian Nation. Currently the Tsimshian people utilize both the "Dunn" orthography developed by the late linguist John Dunn together with Indigenous elders and speakers of Sm'algyax in the 1970s, and the Alaska orthography. The Dunn orthography is embraced by the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority that serves the Ts'msyen communities on Northwestern BC, Canada. Both writing systems are easily interchangeable, and learners should not focus on which one is more favorable. As a Shm'algyack student I have been asked by my Elders to use the Alaskan writing system. However, in this master's project I will utilize both writing systems.

According to the Alaska writing system, "Shm'algyack has a total of sixteen vowel sounds and thirty-four consonants sounds, yielding a total of fifty distinctive sounds", (Roberts, 2009). The writing in the Shm'algyack dictionary used a system that was originally developed by the Elders from Metlakatla, Alaska, with the intention of making it easy for both speakers and learners to use. It has been modified overtime to make it as consistent and accurate a system as possible, (Roberts, 2009).

The Dunn orthography has one symbol for each sound with over 50 distinct letters in the alphabet. It was thought that a one-to-one writing system to use would be the most practical way to learn. This rule for a one-to-one ratio for a writing system eliminates complicated spelling rules, such as rules found in the English language. Although, this writing system uses the English alphabet there are modifications to implement the one sound to each letter rule. Such as, k and k'y are used to represent unique Sm'algyax sounds.

The writing system was created in workshops in the early 1970 by fluent Sm'algyax Elders. In the year 1974 Margret Anderson was invited to Hartley Bay British Columbia along with Elders Arnold Booth, Mary Guthrie. As well as other helpers from Hartley Bay which include Daphne Anderson and Elizabeth Dundas. In the year of 1978 a two-week workshop was held in Hartley Bay which included Elders from the time when Margaret [Seguin] Anderson first began to learn Sm'algyax. That session was attended by Arnold Booth and Mary Guthrie (Metlakatla, Alaska), Don Sankey (Lax Kw'alaams),

Willie Shaw (Kitkatla), Elizabeth Dundas, Ernie Hill, Jr., and Mildred Wilson (Hartley Bay) (Anderson & Ignace, 2008)

The Dunn writing system uses “The Principle for one sound equals one letter”. The orthography uses forty-one long and short vowels. There are twelve distinctive sounds and keywords, these sounds are not represented in a practical alphabet. There are thirty-seven consonants’ places and manners of consonants (Dunn, 1995).

This indigenous language is built on combined words and phrases in a verb subject object grammar structure. Shm’algyack speakers should be able to communicate ideas and information effectively. My project will give students the ability to communicate in the Tsimshian language at a novice level.

Some key letters in reading/writing from Alaskan writing system to BC writing.

\_ Underlines in Alaskan writing indicate where emphasis is used. = Gganhaada

\_ Underlines in BC writing indicate a different sound. = Ganhada

sh	=	s	sheen, siin (dizzy or drunk)
ck	=	x	ckshoa, xsoo (canoe)
hl	=	ł	<u>h</u> la’at, ła’at (ball)
gg	=	g	ggan <u>h</u> laag, g <u>a</u> ñlaak (morning)
‘d	=	t’	‘daa, t’aa (sit or be)
ai bread)	=	ee	<u>a</u> i’dsm <u>a</u> naay, eets’m anaay (frybread, fried
ee	=	ii	eemck, iimx (beard)
oa	=	oo	(yes)
oo	=	uu	oomhl, uumł (bucket)
uu	=	üü	uula, üüla (seal)

(Price, 2022)

## Consonants distinguished in Shm'algyack

Mulder (1994), as well as Dunn (1978) and Anderson and Ignace (2008) provide linguistic descriptions of the Sm'algyax consonants, including their manner of articulation and place of articulation in the vocal tract. different types of consonants. stop; bilabial, alveolar, palatalized, velar (plain), labialized, uvular (ejective, voiceless, voiced).

Stop:

Stop:	bilabial	alveolar
Ejective	p'	t'
Voiceless	p	t
Voiced	b	d

Stop: palatals, velar, labialized and uvulars

Stop:	palatalized	velar (plain)	labialized	uvular
Ejective	K'y	k	k <sup>w'</sup>	k'
Voiceless	ky	k	k <sup>w</sup>	k
Voiced	gy	g	g <sup>w</sup>	ḡ

Nasals exist as bilabial and alveolar voiced consonants, including plain and implosive (pre-glottalized) sounds.

Nasal:

Nasal:	bilabial	alveolar
(plain)	m	n
Implosive	'm	'n

Fricative and affricate consonants exist as alveolar, uvular, and pharyngeal sounds, ; alveolar, uvular, pharyngeal (ejective, voiceless, voiced).

Fricative/Affricate: uvular and pharyngeal

Fricative: alveolar	uvular	pharyngeal
s	x	h
Affricate: Ejective	Voiceless	Voiced
ts'	ts	dz

Mulder continues to distinguish consonants through Approximate; palatalized, velar (plain), labialized, (plain, implosive, unrounded, implosive).

Approximates (approximants): palatals and bilabials

Approximate	palatal	Bilabial (unrounded)	Bilabial (rounded)
(plain)	y		w
Implosive (glottalized)	'y		'w
(plain)		ɥ	
Implosive (glottalized)		'ɥ	

Lateral sounds exist as plain voiced, fricative voiceless and implosive or pre-glottalized sounds.

Lateral:	alveolar
(plain)	l

Fricative	ʃ
Implosive	ɓ

Aspiration:

All plain voiceless stops (e.g., p, k, k, t, ts) that occur at the end of a root word change to voiced stops (e.g., b, g, g, d, dz) when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added. Thus waap (house) changes to waaba gwa'a in the phrase "this is a house." (Anderson and Ignace 2008). The table on the following pages shows the full set of sounds in the Dunn orthography and Alaskan orthography, together with an example word for each, and with its translation.

**Table 3. The Shm'algyack-Sm'algyax Alphabet in the Alaska and Dunn Orthographies**

Sm'algyax Alphabet	Shm'algyack Alphabet	Sm'algyax Example Dunn	Shm'algyack Example Alaskan	English Example
a	a	aax	aack	mouth
aa	aa	yaawxk	yaawkg	eat
		lag	lag	fire
aw	aw	ganaw	gganaow	frog
ee	ai	gaayt	ggaid	hat
b	b	ba'os	bou'ish	monkey
x	ck	dasx	dushck	squirrel
dz	ds	dzigaws	dsiggawsh	dried salmon
	ai	ganaaxs	gganaicksh	ladder



ee	ai	geesk	gaishk	anal fin
g	gg	gabilah	gga'bala	gun
h	h	huus	aah	root
x	ck	xsgiiik	ckshgeeg	eagle
g	g	guda'ats	goatskin	coat
k	k	ksah	kshaa	shark
'k	'k	k'abatgüük	'gubatguuhlg	children
k	k	kwduus	kwoosh	fish knife
k'w	'kw	k'was	k'waash	break
ky	ky	kyoox	kyoagg	grass
k'y	'ky	k'yaal	'kyaal	alone
<u>k</u>	<u>k</u>	wuts'iin	wu'tseen	mouse
<u>'k</u>	<u>'k</u>	<u>k'a'at</u>	<u>'ka' at</u>	cane
l	l	lo'op	loab	rock

(Mulder, 1994)

'l	'l	'lax	'lagg	needle
ł	hl	łguułk	hlgguułk	young one
m	m	moos	moash	thumb
m'	'm	sa'max	sha'mck	butter
n	n	na'ax	na'ack	dress

n'	'n	'neexł	'naachkhl	killer whale
oo	o	sasoo	shoashoa	rattle
oy	oy	ooy	'gal'oy	throw
p	p	pts'aan	p'tsaan	totem pole
P'	'p	p'axs	'backsh	pants
s	sh	sgyet	adashged	spider
t	t	gyenti	gyantee	sea cucumber
t'	't	txaw	tckow	halibut
ts	ts	'watsa	'watsa	land otter
ts'	'ds	dzooks	ts'oacksh	dry
u	u	uumł	oomhl	bucket
üü	u	üüłą	uula	seal
w	w	waap	waab	house
w'	'w	'waan	'waan	teeth
w	w	dziiw	dseeyuu	dolphin
x	x	xbiis	ckbeesh	box
y	y	yaa	yeeh	king salmon
y'	'y	'yuuta	yoota	man
	'	an'on	an'on	hand

## Chapter 8. Conclusions

Torah Harding-Laman, a Tsimshian Graduate student from Lee University in the United States, wrote, “Wayi Wahi! (“LET’S GO!”): Tsimshian and Language Revitalization in Southeast Alaska.” This project was created by utilizing interviews with Tsimshian speakers and teachers in an academic context. Harding-Laman was able to travel to Metlakatla, Juneau, and Ketchikan, Alaska to complete her work.

Her paper provided a history of language loss, the language’s current state, and revitalization mechanisms of the Shm’algyack language. Her research includes interviews with 30 reliable informants connected to Sm’algyack language revitalization. Despite oppression and abuse of the Tsimshian for speaking Sm’algyack, fluent elders are working with linguists, teachers, and students to preserve the language.

Due to dedicated Tsimshian elders, teachers, and students, Shm’algyack perseveres within and beyond Southeast Alaska. Mentor-apprentice programs teach new speakers, organizations have been established for Shm’algyack revitalization, and policies have been initiated to validate Shm’algyack as an official state language (<https://www.chattanooga.com/2019/3/29/387450/Harding-Laman-Presents-AtAnnual.aspx>)

Her findings give hope for the survival and future of our language. The reason why this project is so important to me is the current state of Tsimshian language. There are only a handful of fluent speaking Elders in Alaska and in our traditional territories in British Columbia. With the current state of the language, learners are not always given the chance to speak or learn from our Elders. During my first teaching experience at our local University, I encountered students and Elders who wanted to participate in my class, but were unfortunately turned away due to the lack of funds required to pay tuition. This class was taught at our local University campus in Ketchikan, Alaska. The class was titled Conversational Shm’algyack. My late elder Madeeg (John Reece) was the last fluent first language speaker in Ketchikan, Alaska, my hometown. It is my goal to share my heritage with my community in hopes they will also find peace in their lives. We as members of the Tsimshian Nation will continue to study our history and pass our knowledge down to succeeding generations. The Shm’alyack-Sm’algyax language and our way of life is not gone, it is simply sleeping. We will renew the knowledge of our ancestors. 38 Our indigenous language is not lost - we are now in a revitalization stage to bring back the knowledge and words of our ancestors.

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## **Appendix.**

### **Supplemental Files**

#### **Slides Greetings**

**Filename:**

sfu.thesis.1.greetings.pdf

#### **Slides classroom direction**

**Filename:**

2vm.classroom direction.pdf

#### **Slides clothing**

**Filename:**

3vm.clothing.pdf

#### **Slides objects in the room**

**Filename:**

4.vm.objects in the room (3).pdf

#### **Slides family terms**

**Filename:**

5.vm.familyterms (1).pdf

**Slides household objects**

**Filename:**

sfu.6.vm.householdobjects.pdf

**Slides animals**

**Filename:**

sfu7.Animals (1).pdf

**Slides abstract numbers**

**Filename:**

sfu8Abstract Numbers (2).pdf

**Slides places around town**

**Filename:**

9.vm.Places around.pdf

**Abstract**

**Filename:**

Abstract.pdf