

Written Testimony for National Endowment of the Humanities

The NEH project description

The Klallam Dictionary was published in 2012 and funded by a grant from 'Documenting Endangered Languages' from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Klallam is the language of the Klallam Tribes, who live at Elwha, Jamestown and Port Gamble in Washington State, and Becher Bay on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Klallam is a language of the Central Coast branch of the Salishan Language. In 1978, there were around 100 fluent Klallam speakers, the last two fluent speakers, Hazel Sampson, age 103 and Adeline Smith, age 95 passed away in 2013. Fortunately, over 267 hours of audio recordings were taken by Linguists and others between 1953 – 2011 to help preserve the language.

When the Klallam Language Program began in 1991, there was a rich resource to build the program. With the help of Linguist, Timothy Montler, the Klallam Language Program began to revive the language by developing tools like a writing system, basic grammar lessons, and the use of a wordlist. In working with the growing program, there was a need for more than just a wordlist. The elders and teachers asked Linguist, Timothy Montler if he would publish a dictionary. The Klallam Dictionary has more than 9,000 entries, by 38 fluent Klallam speakers from four different dialects. It also includes: Translations from English to Klallam and Klallam to English, the use of the words in sentences, a brief biography of the 38 elders who contributed, a pronunciation guide and grammar guide, and numerous indexes and a wealth of cultural information.

How the NEH project supports my teaching

This NEH 'Documenting Endangered Languages' grant, vastly improve the ability to teach more effectively the Klallam Language at Port Angeles High School. From 1999 – 2011 there were only three resources: The Klallam Alphabet, 50 grammar lessons, and a wordlist of approximately 2,200 words. These resources were not published yet, the lessons and wordlist was a draft work in progress. It was difficult to transcribe stories, or write speeches or songs with the limited resources we had to work with. The students were getting more advanced, but the resources could not serve the need. When we finally received the Klallam Dictionary in 2012, it opened up access to Klallam Language tremendously. Not only in the classroom, but throughout the reservation and even impacted out into the local Port Angeles community. Anyone interested could access this resource. So many copies of The Klallam Dictionary sold that proceeds from the sale was able to pay for the Klallam Grammar book to be published in 2015. The process of publishing the Klallam Dictionary also uncovered ten more lessons and many corrections to the draft grammar book. Having both of these resources in the classroom

for students to use daily has had a huge impact in student learning. It authenticated our existence and raised up our standard of living or has made our social fabric whole once again.

Some of the projects students have been able to complete include:

- Last month, on April 20, 2017, Peninsula College hosted an annual 'Culture Fair'. Peyton Cable, transcribed 'Amazing Grace' into Klallam. The first verse was already transcribed by Elders, but he wanted to transcribe verses 2-4. Then he and his mother sang it to the tune of 'House of the Rising Sun'.
- At last year's 'Culture Fair', all the year two students transcribed 'The Strong People' story of how we got our name, 'Nəx^wsłá'yəm'. It had never been told in the Klallam Language until then. It was videotaped and illustrated.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was transcribed into Klallam by Elder, Adeline Smith. Students have recited this pledge at school assemblies and other cultural events.
- Students have transcribed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s, 'I Have a Dream' speech into Klallam and presented at the annual MLK assembly at Port Angeles High School.

Impacts on student academic success

- Port Angeles High School Native American students (as a sub-group) scored 10% higher in 2016 than 2015 on the Grade 10 English Language Arts (ELA) Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA), 14% higher than Native students statewide. The population of PAHS is 1,123 with 120 Native students. (Native students make up the largest minority group).
- Since 2005 there have been 700 students who have taken Native American Studies and 582 students who have taken two years of Klallam Language at Port Angeles High School. (213 were from Elwha Klallam).
- From 2011 -2016 there have been 169 Native American students who have graduated from Port Angeles High School. (averaging 27 students per year). From that 169 total 38 students are Elwha Klallam, of those 38 students 27 took Klallam Language.
- From 2012 – 2016 the Grade Point Average improvement rate has increased. For boys (55) In 2012 the average GPA was 1.77. In 2016 the average GPA was 2.43.
For girls (70) In 2012 the average GPA was 1.31. In 2016 the average GPA was 2.53.
These students are on track to graduate.

Testimonials from students

The biggest impact I have seen in the 17 years that I have taught Klallam Language in the public school is an increase sense of cultural identity and pride. When I began to teach Native American Studies in 2005, I have seen in students a sense of awareness, understanding, respect for the local tribal history, overall creating a healthier social fabric for both the Lower Elwha Klallam tribal community and the Port Angeles community. Here are a few student reflections:

. . . The Klallam Dictionary and Grammar books helped establish a well thought community. It expanded our traditions and helped get the Klallam Language used by the youth. . . Dejon Watson-Charles

. . . Taking Klallam Language has helped me become mor social at school . . .Alli Krieder

. . . Taking Klallam Languages has allowed me to have fun learning and also connect to my roots of who I am. Taking Klallam Language has allowed me to be more optimistic towards my day . . . Alan Charles

. . . Our Klallam Language was already almost lost, we've been fighting to revive and keep it alive . . . Gillian Elofson

. . . I chose to take Klallam Language because it is a language that is used near where I live. It's good to know the language and traditions of the Native people you live near . . . Morgan Ballinger

. . . I hope this program continues to be funded because we never had the opportunity to learn the Klallam Language for so long and lost much of it. I want my grandkids to know what happened. . .

. . . The Klallam Language class has allowed me to learn more about my culture which has almost been lost in the past. . . Peyton Cable

Tribal Community Klallam Language Programs:

Since the Klallam Language Program began in 1991, there have been many community projects to help revitalize the language.

- A community class for new parents who want to teach Klallam to their newborns called, 'Baby Talk'.

- Inter-tribal community classes with Jamestown and Port Gamble. Several Klallams from the other two Klallam Tribes have become certified to teach Klallam Language and have developed similar programs within their tribal communities.
- Lower Elwha Tribal Head Start programs and Child Care. There has always been a dedicated Klallam Language Teaching position at these two early learning sites.
- Afterschool elementary and middle school programs.
- Summer School programs for all three grade levels (Elementary, Middle, High School).
- Klallam Language teachers also provide outreach in elementary and middle school classrooms.