



**Question and Answer Summary**

**Híkáñakvłants: We Will Rise Higher and Higher**

**with Fran Brown**

November 28, 2024

**Q: Your presentation is awe inspiring in the amount of work that you've done and so much has been accomplished. What do you think were a few really key things that paved the way for that success? What's been really essential to having all of this happen for your Nation?**

This work requires a comprehensive, long-term approach, with significant costs. Our Nation was one of seven involved in the [reconciliation process](#), securing unprecedented language funding. Thanks to our Hałćístut team, which is in active negotiations with B.C. and Canada, we've secured substantial language funding, though it does not fully address the socio-economic gap. Additional support from FPCC, Canadian Heritage, and the [Donner Foundation](#) has allowed our team to grow from one member to 53-54 staff, with a payroll of \$1.5 million—crucial for our language revitalization efforts. Our success is driven by a dedicated team, with experts promoted into leadership roles for greater impact. Additionally, [our five-year strategic plan](#) and Phase Two, developed by Ayla Brown, provide a clear roadmap for our ongoing and future efforts.

**Q: I have a lot of staff that ask about getting out on the land and learn more. How do you go about your professional development when it comes to play-based learning and on-the-land learning?**

In our remote community, on-the-land learning requires hiring boats to Bákvlá for traditional food gathering.

Our adult immersion program offers a place-based Hałtzaqvłá course, including cedar harvesting, medicinal plant gathering, and herring egg and seaweed harvesting. After harvesting, students deliver an oral presentation in Hałtzaqvłá.

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Children in the nest program, accompanied by their parents, take a day trip to observe herring egg and seaweed harvesting.

Growing up, my family and I were unaware of the deep history within our territory. Our ancestors' wisdom is imprinted on old village sites. Beyond food gathering, place-based learning includes visits to pictographs, petroglyphs, clam gardens, and fish traps. At the Language Nest's launch, we had little formal teacher training but recognized the link between early childhood education and second-language learning. Since August, our educators have studied the five stages of early childhood development and continue to refine our play-based approach.

**Q: Where did you receive the Belly Buds? I think those are so cool.**

An Elder stated “from Womb to Tomb”. We have a prenatal program, and we have had fluent Elder speakers continue to mentor until they cross over.

As part of our prenatal program, we use Belly Buds to introduce Haítzaqvł̓a to babies in the womb. Research shows that by 18 weeks, babies begin to identify who they are and by 20 weeks, they can hear. What they hear in the womb becomes soothing after birth and beyond. This approach has been successful for families participating in the program. The Belly Buds were ordered online.

**Q: What does TPR and WAYK stand for?**

[Total Physical Response \(TPR\)](#) which we studied at the Chase, B.C. summer learning series, uses action-based commands for language learning. and [Where Are Your Keys \(WAYK\)](#) developed by Evan Gardner, integrates American Sign Language to teach a second language. In July 2024, Gardner conducted a month-long teacher training in Bella Bella. Both methods are engaging, inclusive, and highly effective for our Nation.

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**Q: We're curious about your collaboration with UBC and SFU. How long have you been doing it? And how did you find the process?**

We partner with SFU to offer Indigenous language certificate and diploma programs. When we launched our adult immersion program, I reached out to Marianne Ignace, who had an established framework, making collaboration seamless.

With UBC, our focus is on dictionary development. After reviewing our five-year strategic plan, they identified ways to support our goals. Our primary contact is Mark Turin. We also plan to offer a Heiltsuk course at UBC in 2026.

<https://heiltsuk.arts.ubc.ca/>

**Q: Did you find acquiring funding for these programs easy? Or was it something that you had to really work for?**

The funding approval process can be stressful, as Nations across B.C. also compete for available resources. To date, we have secured additional funding from the Donner Foundation, First Peoples' Cultural Council, and Heritage Canada. Revitalizing and restoring languages to full vitality is a costly and time-consuming endeavor, but it remains essential for preserving our cultural heritage.

For more details, visit our Hałtzaqv Revitalization

Website: <https://heiltsukrevitalization.com>.

Note: during the Q&A period Brian Maracle and Root Word method were mentioned. Owennatekha (Brian Maracle) started [Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa](#) (Our Language Society) with Onekiyohstha (Audrey Maracle) in 1999. More about the Root Word method can be found [here](#).

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