

**Introduction:**

There are seven member communities in the province of BC that comprise the Okanagan Nation: Osoyoos, Penticton, Lower Similkameen, Upper Similkameen, Westbank, Vernon and Douglas Lake. Each community has a language program. These language programs are primarily in-school language programs. The language teachers for the most part are fluent speakers but some language teachers are adult language learners. The communities also differ in how they address language and culture issues. Some communities take an active role in the implementation of language and culture programs in the schools, others don't.

This paper will examine the types of programs, the language teachers, and the level of community involvement in each community. I will not attempt to provide statistics, scores, achievement results of the students because these are not available to me. The purpose of this paper is to show the need for qualified teachers in the language programs and the need for diverse methods in language teaching. Each community is unique and each community comes with its own needs and its own strengths.

**The Communities:**

Osoyoos Indian Band reservation is situated between the towns of Oliver and Osoyoos. The population is approximately 400+. Most of the people live in the subdivision which is located about a mile from the town of Oliver's boundaries. There are two public elementary schools and one high school in Oliver town. We have a private school on-reserve: snpaqcin. The language is taught in the Tuc-el-nuit Elementary School and at the snpaqcin school on reserve. Language classes are also offered at the Daycare/Headstart Centre located on the snpaqcin school complex. Lower Similkameen Indian Band is "over the hill" from Oliver/Osoyoos. It consists of one large reserve and several smaller ones that are situated along the Similkameen

River near the town of Keremeos. There is a high school and an elementary school at Cawston (ten minutes south of Keremeos) that offers language and culture programs. There is a head-start program on-reserve that just started in September of 2005 modelled after the language nests of the Maori People.

Upper Similkameen is an hour east of Keremeos near the town of Hedley on Hwy. 3. This is the smallest populated community of the Okanagan Nation numbering approximately 65 members. The high school kids are bussed into Keremeos and there is one elementary school to grade four that offers language and culture.

Penticton is a half hour north of Oliver on Hwy 97. There is a native operated school on-reserve staffed by Penticton band members only which offers a language and culture program. Two elementary schools and one high school in town offer a cultural awareness program only.

Westbank is situated about 45 minutes north of Penticton on Hwy 97 as well. There is a private school on-reserve, Snsysysten, which offers language and culture. The other schools offer cultural awareness only in town.

Vernon is situated another 45 minutes north of Westbank along Hwy 97. There is a daycare on-reserve that offers language and culture and one elementary school and one high school. I am not sure if these programs are still in place.

Douglas Lake is our most remote community. It is situated slightly north-west of the town of Merritt about 45 miles. There is a native operated school on-reserve staffed by all native people. Their language and culture program is offered from pre-school to grade seven. The high school kids are bussed into Merritt.

### The Teachers:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Okanagan Community</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Fluency</b>	<b>Training</b>
David Tanner	Osoyoos Indian Band	Snpaqcin	Semi-fluent	Two year teacher training program, En;owkin Centre
Modesta Betterton	Osoyoos Indian Band	Tuc-el-nuit Elementary	Fluent speaker/Elder	Adult teacher training
Theresa Dennis	Lower Similkamen	Keremeos High, Cawston Elementary	Fuent speaker/Elder	Teacher Certificate (Retiring)
Marlene Squakin	Upper Similkameen	Heldey Elementary	Semi-fluent	
Arnie Baptiste	Penticton	Outma Sqilxw	Fluent speaker	Teacher certificate
Delphine Derickson	Westbank	Snsysyusten	Fluent speaker/Elder	Two year teacher training certificate, En'owkin Centre
Mona Williams	Vernon	Snccmalaten Daycare Center	Semi-fluent	
Shirley Paul	Vernon	Snccmalaten Daycare Center	Fluent speaker/Elder	
Terry Manuel	Douglas Lake	Nkwala School	Fluent speaker/Elder	

### The Programs:

Each language program is taught as a subject. Each community offers the language in different time increments, but the time allotted does not exceed an hour two or three times a week in the public schools. The private schools fare no better. The on-reserve schools run by Native administrators are better off in this regard.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Okanagan Community</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Amenities</b>
David Tanner	Osoyoos Indian Band	Snpaqcin	Language as a Subject: starting at 10 minutes for pre-school to half an hour for grade 7	Has a language and culture classroom
Modesta Betterton	Osoyoos Indian Band	Tuc-el-nuit Elementary	Language as a Subject: starting at 10 minutes for pre-school to half an hour for grade 7	Offers the language class in the library
Theresa Dennis	Lower Similkamen	Keremeos High, Cawston Elementary	Language as a Subject: starting at 10 minutes for pre-school to half an hour for grade 7	Has a language and culture room
Marlene Squakin	Upper Similkameen	Heldey Elementary	Language as a Subject: starting at 10 minutes for pre-school to half an hour for grade 7	Visits each class daily
Arnie Baptiste	Penticton	Outma Sqilxw	Language as a Subject: starting at 10 minutes for pre-school to half an hour for grade 7	Has a language and culture classroom
Delphine Derickson	Westbank	Snsysysten	Language as a Subject: starting at 10 minutes for pre-school to half an hour for grade 7	Has a language and culture room
Mona Williams	Vernon	Sncmalaten Daycare Center	Language as a Subject: 10-15 minutes for pre-school daily	Visits the class in the AM and the PM

**Teacher Responsibilities:**

Each teacher is responsible for creating their own curriculum and their own worksheets and handouts. Class prep time is limited to about an hour each day. For those teachers who are in the public school systems, they must comply with school policies by offering language assessments quarterly for report card purposes. I believe snpaqcin and snsysyusten also requires testing to take place.

**Extracurricular Activities:**

At most all of the public schools, field trips are limited. Field trip planning must follow guidelines of the school districts. The teachers must submit request a field trip giving dates, permission cards for parents and arrange bus transportation. The private on-reserve schools snpaqcin and snsysyusten are the same as the public schools. The on-reserve schools: Outma Sqilxw and Nkwala, can take their kids on field trips as often as the language teacher requests a field trip. The only requirement is permission forms for parents and parent volunteers to accompany the children.

**Language as a Subject:**

The language and culture is taught, beginning with the earlier grades, for only 10 - 15 minutes two or three times a week in the public schools. There are no immersion formats available to the children. I understand that the Headstart Program the Lower Similkameen offers is immersion but I am not positive. The method of delivery for snpaqcin and Tuc-el-nuit is TPR. Snsysyusten also offers TPR and storytelling. The fluent speakers are able to offer storytelling, but the semi-fluent speakers are restricted to the lessons prepared before hand. The programs at the on-reserve Native run schools: Outma Sqilxw and Nkwala offer the most enriched programs. Elders come into the school on a daily basis, they accompany the children on field trips, they participate in the classroom daily and tell stories to the children daily.

**Teacher Preparation:**

Of the eight teachers, two are provincially certified and two completed the two year Language Teacher Preparation Certificate Program offered by the En'owkin Centre in Penticton BC. We often hear from the teachers they need more language teaching methods courses, curriculum development courses, reading and writing courses and classroom management courses.

**Other Needs:**

En'owkin offers a Cultural Development course over two semesters. This course includes the seasonal activities of the Okanagan People. We take the students through a year of subsistence living patterns both traditional and contemporary. We also take the students on numerous field trips to culturally relevant sites that are important to the Okanagan People. Each site has a captikwl connected to it. We tell the student the legend associated with it, the other stories connected to the site and the place names and the site's importance. We also take the students on food gathering trips as well as medicinal plant gathering trips. We take the students out on the land to fish, hunt and gather foods. We do a hunting unit where the students are shown the whole process of skinning, butchering and cooking a deer (yummy). Names of body parts, relevance of each piece and use of each piece are given as well. We also do a fishing unit, a legend unit (captikwl) and a ceremony/song unit. This course is very relevant to the students for language and cultural purposes. The practicing teachers would like to see this course offered in the summer months so they could participate as well.

**The Six Elements:**

1. Recognition and use of Native American languages, or as a first or second language.
2. Pedagogy that stresses traditional cultural characteristics, and adult-child interactions as the starting place for one's education (mores that are currently practiced in the community, and which may differ from community to community).
3. Pedagogy in which teaching strategies are congruent with the traditional culture as well as contemporary ways of knowing and learning (opportunities to observe, opportunities to practice, and opportunities to demonstrate skills).
4. Curriculum that is based on traditional culture, which recognizes the importance of Native spirituality, and places the education of the young children in contemporary context (eg., use and understanding of the visual arts, legends, oral histories, and fundamental beliefs of the community).
5. Strong Native community participation (including parents, elders, other community resources) in educating children and evident in the curriculum.
6. Knowledge and use of the social and political mores of the community.

**The Community Language Programs and the Six Elements:**

Elements:	Osoyoos	Lower Sim	Upper Sim	Pen	WB	Vernon	Douglas Lake
<b>1. Recognition</b>	Only in language classroom	Only in language classroom	Only in language classroom	In other school areas	Only in language classroom	Only in language classroom	In other school areas
<b>2. Cultural Characteristics, Mores</b>	Little	More	Little	A lot	More	Little	A lot
<b>3. Congruency</b>	Little	More	Little	A lot	More	Little	A lot
<b>4. Sprituality</b>	Little	More	Little	A lot	More	Little	A lot
<b>5. Community Participation</b>	Little	More	Little	A lot	More	Little	A lot
<b>6. Social and Political Mores</b>	Little	More	Little	A lot	More	Little	A lot

**Reasons for ratings:**

I feel that the six elements are not evident in the language classrooms in the Okanagan communities because the communities themselves have transferred over to the schools the responsibility of transmitting the language and culture to the Native students. In some communities this attitude is much worse than others. Also, another

reason is the fact that for the two semi-fluent speakers, the level of fluency hinders the transmission of the language to the students. The school administrators also have a large impact in how the language program is run. There is little control of time allotments for language teaching, little time for the students to go on field trips and human resources such as Elders and other resource persons are not as readily available for the more isolated schools like Hedley. While the public schools are amenable to Elders coming into the classroom, they also require a schedule of activities and course delivery with assessments that require a lot of the time of the language teachers to complete each quarter. The schools that are locally controlled at the band level have more control as to content, delivery, time allotments and field trips. They also have an open door policy for Elders and resource persons to come in and share with the students their knowledge and expertise. These schools can follow the seasonal activities of the Okanagan people more readily as well. Activities are also not restricted to in-school time periods. For instance, in the Douglas Lake area, it has been a traditional activity to go mushroom picking, to go ice-fishing and to go to the cultural camp for storytelling and a camp-out. These activities involve the whole community in planning, implementation and observance. The communities that are not as keen on participating in community traditional activities are those communities where there is a lot of economic development and the people are tied to the time clock. Osoyoos, for example, has two wineries, four vineyards, gas station/store, hotel, campground, concrete mix plant, two golf courses and a Heritage Centre. Political mores is one that follows along the same lines as the economic development criteria. The Chiefs and Councils in these communities have so much to oversee that while language and culture may be on their list, there is much more to do and the issues around language and culture never get addressed fully.

### **Some Outside Evidence for Osoyoos/Similkameen:**

Two reports by the School District 53 for 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 state that the aboriginal population of students are over represented in the behaviour categories, there is still a large gap between English 11 and English 12, and aboriginal participation in Math 12 is non-existent. There was little change between these two reports.

The parental involvement appears to be limited to participation in parent/teacher interviews, discipline issues and behaviour problems.

There is no mention of language and culture congruency except encouraging participation in multicultural week activities, powwow dancing (not an Okanagan activity), arts and crafts day, and Okanagan Day.

The report also gives demographics as to the length of time the language programs have been in the school district schools:

Cawston Elementary: 6 years

Hedley Elementary: 6 years

Similkameen Elementary School: 8 years

Tuc-el-nuit Elementary: 15 years (my community)

Similkameen High: 4 years

Southern Okanagan Secondary: 4 years (not offered for the past two years).

There is no data on levels of fluency of students who have attended the language programs at these schools. There is also no data on assessment scores and how these affect the rest of the students' participation in the schools. But, given the data by the school district, I can't see these language and culture programs are making a huge impact.

**Conclusions:**

There are many things to consider in these communities. Many of the six elements are missing or not present in significant amounts to matter. The language teachers are at the mercy of public school scheduling, room allocations and curriculum and assessment specifications. The fluent teachers are reaching the age of retirement, and the semi-fluent teachers are having to develop curriculum a step ahead of the students. The teachers also require more training, in fact are requesting more training. The lack of available teaching personnel in the Oliver area at SOSS necessitated the closure of the language program as there was no one to teach. When a teacher was found, the students were already enrolled in other language programs such as French and Spanish. Community attitudes need to be addressed. Promotion of the language and culture needs to take place. The importance of the language and culture to the identity of the children needs to be conveyed to the parents as well.

**Bibliography:**

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