

MEDIA RELEASE

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NIC Offers Kwak'wala Language Course this January

NIC will offer its first Indigenous language course in Port Hardy this January, thanks in part to a T'sax̱is (Fort Rupert) resident.

NIC instructor Sara Child developed the Introduction to Kwak'wala course for NIC a year ago to bring the language to life in the community.

"Despite our efforts to increase language learning in elementary schools, our youth and adults don't have many opportunities to learn from fluent Kwak'wala speakers. Language revitalization needs to draw on people of all ages in the community to succeed. I'm very grateful NIC approved the course this April and embraced this opportunity."

The Kwak'wala language is spoken in several different dialects in 15 First Nations' communities from the K'omoks First Nation in the south to the Tlatlasikwala First Nation on the northern end of Vancouver Island as well as in communities on the central BC coast.

Child will bring elders and Kwak'wala speakers of many of those different dialects into the class to respect people and cultures of individual communities.



Sara Child



The language and healing logo was designed by Rejean Child and is dedicated to anyone committed to learning Kwak'wala. The cedar tree in the centre depicts the Hase?, the breath of Kwakwaka'wakw ancestors, which depends on all Kwakwaka'wakw for survival.

"I can speak the language a bit but I'm far from fluent, said Child, a Kwakiutl Nation member who is working toward her Masters of Indigenous Language Revitalization degree at UVic and coordinated UVic's Bachelor of Education degree last year. "Drawing from the knowledge of our elders is the only way we can respectfully deliver this course."

In 2014, the Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages estimated 2.3 per cent of Kwakwaka'wakw people speak the language fluently, while 10.6 per cent of the population are learning the language.

Child sees an urgent role for youth and adults who play a vital role in keeping the language and culture alive in communities.

"This isn't about our children learning Kwak'wala in class for 30 minutes a day and expecting them to become fluent," she said. "If we are going talk about language acquisition for future generations, language and culture need to be intertwined and the whole community needs to learn it together. When youth and adults become language learners, that's when it's going to come to life."

NIC's [Introduction to Kwak'wala course](#) focuses on immersive learning. Students will practice listening and speaking, with emphasis on conversation, structure and pronunciation. It is designed for all learners from high school students to professionals, parents and elders in the community who want to learn more about the Kwak'wala language and culture. Adult students working toward their high school graduation, can also apply the course toward their BC adult graduation diploma.

"I know there is interest from nurses and professionals here as well as from people as far south as Courtenay," Child said. "It would be great to have artists, storytellers and a wide range of community members join us to strengthen the cultural connections.

The class takes place Wednesday evenings from 5 to 8 pm starting January 4 at the Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre.

It is one of three courses with Indigenous content offered in the region this January, including [First Peoples Literature and Composition course \(ENG 096\)](#) and [Composition and Indigenous Literature I \(ENG 125\)](#). Students may also be interested in NIC's new [Aboriginal education assistant program](#) starting in January at the Port Hardy campus.

For more information about programs, courses, and funding support for NIC courses, visit www.nic.bc.ca/mw or contact NIC Student Services directly at 250-949-7912.

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