



**KTUNAXA
NATION**

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New early years curriculum helps to promote Ktunaxa language



Photo: Chelsea Nicholas, of Paq'mi Nuq'yuk Aboriginal Early Years, holding one of the many tools developed to support the Ktunaxa language.

ʔakisqnuuk

Lower Kootenay

St. Mary's

Tobacco Plains

Cranbrook/Ktunaxa Traditional Territory - The 'Ktunaxa for Tots' curriculum is a new Ktunaxa language program designed by Paq'mi Nuq'yuk Aboriginal Early Years employee, Chelsea Nicholas. The program developed by Nicholas, in collaboration with the Little Badger's Learning Centre, was designed to help children under the age of six connect with their culture and language. It is at this age when children have the greatest capacity to learn something that they can carry with them the rest of their lives.

"I believe that every person in the world is entitled to an identity," said Nicholas. "Learning their traditional language is one of the many ways of providing Ktunaxa children a key piece towards developing their own identity. Having a role in that is both an honour and a privilege."

The Ktunaxa language is an isolate, which means there are no other languages like it in the world. Currently there are only a handful of fluent speakers, and it is officially classified as critically endangered of becoming extinct.

"It is vital that we do all that we can for our future generations," said Nicholas. "Many efforts have been put into language preservation, promotion and delivery over the years, and I am happy to be part of the collective effort."

Nicholas, a Ktunaxa Nation Member, has already seen the benefits in a very short period, with many children having already graduated from the eight session program. The curriculum covers topics such as body parts, colours, animals, numbers, seasons and basic expressions. Each session also includes a craft or activity that enhances the learning by making it fun.

Feedback on the curriculum has been very positive and the sessions have been very well received from both students and teachers. It has now been successfully delivered in two early childhood centres, one in Kimberley and one in Invermere, and can also be delivered on a one-to-one basis by request.

The curriculum was developed as part of the services provided by the Paq'mi Nuq'yuk Aboriginal Early Years Program. Paq'mi Nuq'yuk itself means to blossom or burst from the ground in the Ktunaxa language, and was chosen to represent the potential of all children to blossom into something special. The Paq'mi Nuq'yuk program offers a holistic approach while providing support and services in education, health, nutrition, as well as culture and language.

Although the curriculum developed was originally intended for youth, it has also been proven to be beneficial to learners of any age, with some beginning adults also starting to use it.

"I have had many interested parents following along with their child, which makes a better learning environment for everybody," continued Nicholas. "It shows you that it is never too late to start learning Ktunaxa!"

For more information on having the Ktunaxa for Tots program delivered or the Paq'mi Nuq'yuk Aboriginal Early Years Program, please contact Chelsea Nicholas or Charlene Sperling 250-489-4563.

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