

Tsúut'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha:
Post-Secondary Program Proposal for Tsúut'ínà Nation

By

Ts'òòtsākūwá kāk'ā

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Bachelor of Anthropology, Mount Royal University, 2024

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
 Requirements for the Degree of
 MASTER OF EDUCATION
 in the Department of Indigenous Education

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University of Victoria

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək^wəŋən (Songhees and X^wsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək^wəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Mágunaàzhó, doo Tsúut'ínà Nisk'aà isaàdlíni, nàdàgwaàt'ini, ùwà ádànaats'isdí-hí ùwà tlat'a diná doo gidaghaást'oghà águgilàgí, ùwà gudinaàchòwáa ùwà gwádànisaàli, diná wúnadií ùwà doo ts'ínisk'a gughàyinó-ná niníshà jú.

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Datl'ishí Nátsitl'à ("Abstract")

This paper presents the development of the *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànisha Post-Secondary Program*, a groundbreaking initiative designed to revitalize and sustain the Tsúūt'ínà language and culture through a comprehensive, accredited certificate program within the Tsúūt'ínà Nation. Grounded in Indigenous research methodologies and guided by the wisdom of Elders, community engagement, and personal lived experience, this project addresses the urgent need for culturally responsive language education at the adult and post-secondary levels.

Through critical review of a research bundle, comparative witnessing, and relational research practices, the program framework prioritizes community-based curriculum, holistic learning outcomes, and the integration of traditional knowledge systems. The research explores effective methods for adult language acquisition, assesses the impact of higher education partnerships, and identifies strategies for supporting proficient Tsúūt'ínà speakers and future instructors. Research underscores the centrality of language in cultural identity, the necessity of community-driven approaches, and the transformative power of Indigenous-led education. This work contributes valuable insights for Indigenous language revitalization efforts, offering a model for other Nations seeking to reclaim and strengthen their languages and ways of life through post-secondary education.

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Gustidiyínó-ná (“Acknowledgement”)

I would like to acknowledge the teachings of our protocols, the tobacco offering that went before me before I began my Masters project, the good mind, heart, spirit, intention, and purpose is already out there doing the work for me as I have offered tobacco to the lands of Tsúūt’ínà, for nìihigunáhà (“our language”), naahínànisha (“our way of life”), naàhinisk’a (“our land”), naàhisgàká (“our children”), and Tsúūt’ínà-yiná (“Tsúūt’ínà people”).

I would also like to acknowledge my Elders, Language Speakers, and Mentors for guiding with their wisdom, empathy, knowledge, and language teachings. My Elders, Language Speakers, and Mentors have supported and believed in me more than I expected. They have consistently emphasized the significance of our language and culture, highlighting how essential it is to learn, speak, and practice our language to ensure its preservation for future generations. They have helped me understand how closely connected our language and culture are, showing that our language carries its own spirit and deeply influences who we become. It reflects our identity and beautifully conveys what makes being Tsúūt’ínà so unique and rich.

I want to give a special thanks out to Dr. Bruce Starlight, Dr. Christopher Cox, Tsúūt’ínà Language and Culture/Traditions Committee and Tsúūt’ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà for their support, mentorship, guidance and inspiration. Dr. Bruce Starlight and Dr. Christopher Cox had assisted me with translating and toning the phrases in the headings and Tsúūt’ínà language within my Masters Project. It takes a language family to continue this important work for our language.

I also want to give a special thanks to my Masters Indigenous Language Revitalization (MILR) cohort family and the University of Victoria Indigenous Education Faculty (Dr. Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins, Dr. Belinda kakiyosēw Daniels, and the rest of our MILR Instructors) for

their love and support. I've created lifelong friendships with my MILR cohort, my extended language family. We truly are the inspiration for languages to thrive forward.

Gots'idinátí (“Dedication”)

I am dedicating my Master’s project to s̀sgàkà (“my children”), Jewel and Mark Starlight. One day, siits’a (“my daughter”) Jewel shared with me, “Mom, I want to be a g̀nàhà (“language”) teacher when I grow up.” I want to acknowledge her passion, courage, wisdom, and aspiration for our Tsúut’ínà language. I am doing the language work for you, my children. I love you so much and I encourage you to continue speaking our language to one another and others around you. You are my inspiration. You are my purpose for niìhigunàhà (“our language”). G̀m̀isítìy (“you keep going/perseverance”). I will promise to continue my language learning for you and your children’s children.

Love Inoó (“Mom”).

I also want to dedicate my Masters project to my Tsúut’ínà language and culture. Siyìsgaas (“Thank you”) for recognizing, acknowledging, and trusting me when I needed this lifelong learning path. If it wasn’t for my language I wouldn’t be where I am today. Language and culture brought me to light when there was no light and has always reassured me when I’ve needed reassuring. My language and culture has healed me when I thought I didn’t need healing. I am thankful for the gift of language and how it fills my heart. When I think of how can I give thanks to our language and culture, the only thought that comes to mind is speaking and practicing our language as much as I can to whomever I can, if it’s within my home fire or Nation programming. When I hear our language and culture being practiced then I know I am honouring our language spirit in a good way.

Tsúut’ínà g̀nàhà ág̀yìshòł (“I am learning Tsúut’ínà language”).

Tsúut’ínà g̀snà (“Speak Tsúut’ínà”).

Tsúut’ínà g̀nàhà ch’adít’ā?í āt’ā (“The Tsúut’ínà language is holy/sacred”)

Gúʔí Datʼishí (“Introduction”)

This project aims to advance the understanding and development of Tsúūt’ínà language and culture within post-secondary education, focusing on Indigenous language revitalization initiatives. The primary objective is to design a comprehensive program framework for a Tsúūt’ínà language and culture certificate at the post-secondary level. This initiative addresses the need for academically accredited programming on Tsúūt’ínà Nation lands, delivered by and for the Tsúūt’ínà people. It is motivated both by the broader call for Indigenous-led education and personally inspired by my daughter, siíts’a (“my daughter”) Jewel.

The intended beneficiaries are members of the Tsúūt’ínà Nation, including Tsúūt’ínà-yiná (“Tsúūt’ínà people”), naàhisgàká (“our children”), naàhinisk’a (“our land”), and naahínànisha (“our way of life”). The project seeks to develop a robust post-secondary certificate program in Tsúūt’ínà language and culture, to be implemented within Tsúūt’ínà Nation, located in Treaty 7. The proposed timeline anticipates MILR project completion by May 2026, after which planning will commence for integration into existing Nation programming.

The aim is to develop a proposal and framework for the Tsúūt’ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànisha Post-Secondary Program, which will jumpstart the creation, planning, and organization of this initiative for Tsúūt’ínà Nation. This framework outlines the curriculum, program description, learning outcomes, and course objectives. The program considers several benefits, such as accreditation for future language and culture instructors, succession planning, and capacity building. Above all, it focuses on revitalizing the Tsúūt’ínà Way of Life, Knowledge, Being, and Doing.

This program is a two-year initiative that consists of eight courses. The eight courses included three language proficiency courses, a Tsúūt’ínà worldview course, a Tsúūt’ínà land-

based course, a Tsúūt'ínà language revitalization course, a Tsúūt'ínà documentation and digital tools course, and a Tsúūt'ínà second-language learning and pedagogies course. The program comprised twelve weeks of instruction per course, with thirty-six hours of instruction, and culminated in a certificate.

The overarching goal is to foster continued learning and acquisition of the Tsúūt'ínà language in a post-secondary context, empowering community members to become future instructors and supporting language preservation efforts in diverse educational settings. The project's approach is grounded in rigorous research, supported by established methodologies, methods, and a research bundle review.

As I gather my thoughts on the vision I have been having for a *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program* - I envision my relationships with my Elders and Mentors over the years of my language journey. As a language program, we have come so far and, like others, have faced many challenges and successes. We are at a point in our programming where there is a need to support adult language learners. I also envision this from a personal experience; when I graduated high school and joined University, I wanted to learn the language and culture of my Nation from our grandparents, knowledge keepers, leaders, and parents, but this was not possible. So, this vision I had is to create an opportunity that I did not have, and to open the education journey for our Tsúūt'ínà people to learn from our own and to gain a higher education to succeed in their walks of life for Tsúūt'ínà naahínànísha (“Tsúūt'ínà way of life”). It is time to take what has been waiting for us in Tsúūt'ínà: the opportunity to accredit students from our programs and support our language and culture at a post-secondary level of education.

When I think about this vision, Shawn Wilson and Kathy Absolon come to mind when they speak of relationships. Wilson (2008) shares Indigenous methodology regarding relational

accountability: "As a researcher, you are answering to all your relations" (p. 177). Wilson's work on Indigenous methodology makes me think about this initiative of starting to think and create a vision into a reality for all my relations. I needed to sit in ceremony and pray to my ancestors to receive their guidance and wisdom before I delve deeper into my vision. Research is a ceremony that has fulfilled me in my search journey when I do language work for my Nation. Ceremony and prayer would be the first step in pursuing the knowledge I will gain for myself and all my relations. Similarly, Kathy Absolon (2022) in her petal flower framework, makes me examine my research bundle for my vision for a post-secondary program. The post-secondary program is a need for our language programming. The vision may be a considerable undertaking, and I am up for the challenge. I needed to sit with this in ceremony to receive a sense of purpose in a good way and see what the beauty of creation of our world has to offer my spirit and research.

A clear understanding of what's needed for a language program has guided Tsúūt'ínà language initiatives since the 1970s, led by respected fluent speakers. In 2008, the established Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Institute, now known as Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà, became the Nation's primary language revitalization program. Our mandate states: "The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà will create a language community using various traditional and contemporary methods. We're committed to teaching and learning Tsúūt'ínà to all who are interested, focusing on developing new fluent speakers and creating relevant language resources (2026)".

Our language programming spans from early childhood—daycare, head-start, elementary, middle, and high school—to adult education. We also offer community programs such as a 12-week course, evening and online classes, department-specific sessions, community projects, and events. Resource development involves producing a broad range of materials for classrooms, homes, and the wider community. Staff proficiency development is a priority, as is documentation, which includes translation, digitization, audio/visual recording, and archiving.

Oversight is provided by our Tsúūt'ínà language and culture/traditions committee, which offers guidance and support for documentation and project materials across all language initiatives. Our vision statement reads: “Wusá Tsúūt'ínà nináyinòtí-gù gùts'ína-hí úwà datl'ishí, tlát'a dzánagù da-hí úwà wusá Tsúūt'ínà. Our vision is the full revitalization of Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà in all forms, spoken and written, as a legacy to past, present, and future Tsúūt'ínà People (2026)”.

While we are fortunate to offer programming within our Nation, it is urgent that we prioritize staff proficiency. We must establish a robust adult fluency lifeline by increasing proficiency across all age groups and fostering environments for daily language use outside the classroom. Additionally, designing post-secondary program pathways will help cultivate both speakers and teachers.

Gúní K'asóna Atlak'ats'iyiyáʔí (“Situating Self”)

Áyahò Naàtò, Isúh-yiná ùwa Isàghá-yiná,

Sízi-tii Ts'ootsakúwá Kák'á ùwa Waste Tancansuta Winyan at'a,

Tsúūt'ínà guts'i anist'aʔi at'a,

Tsiiz itsizí ch'át'ághà ùwa tlik'úyá nist'in ìdà ùwa tóódii díích'í mitoó sizasi,

Diyí dzinísí ínígí gwánístí ùwa tiya sidzánághá gwánístí.

Xat'a yinisin, Xat'a nits'íʔiskàd, Gwánístínaa-tii.

(“I acknowledge our Creator and our Ancestors. My real names are Ts'ootsakuwa Kak'a and Waste Tancansuta Winyan. My English name is Janelle Crane-Starlight. I am from Tsúūt'ínà Nation. My birthday is July 9 and I am 34 years old. I am happy for this beautiful day and my heart is happy. This is what I ask for, this is what I want. I am very thankful”).

Ts'òòtsākūwá kāk'ā is a Tsúūt'ínà name given to me by Elders from my Nation at a Naming Ceremony which translates to Old Lady's Path. My Tsúūt'ínà name sits close to my heart, our Elders gave it to me due to the work I carry for my Nation in Indigenous Language Revitalization – following an Old Lady's Path. Waste Tancansuta Winyan is a Dakota Sioux name given to me in a Night Lodge Ceremony by our Grandfathers and Grandmothers which translates to Good Hale Woman. I am thankful for this name as it brings me closer to who I am as a Dakota Sioux and connection to my Ancestors.

First and foremost, I am Tsúūt'ínà. I come from Tsúūt'ínà First Nation. Tsúūt'ínà is located within Treaty 7. As the Tsúūt'ínà First Nation, the Tsúūt'ínà is a sovereign people and signatories to Treaty Number 7. Treaty 7 lands lies in what is now called southern Alberta, Canada, where the prairies meet the foothills and the Rocky Mountains. The Tsúūt'ínà are the

sole Dene-speaking group within Treaty 7 territory and belong to the Dene family. My father and paternal grandparents are from Tsúūt'ínà Nation. The Tsúūt'ínà language is the official language of the Tsúūt'ínà people. I also come from Goodfish Lake First Nation. Goodfish Lake is located with Treaty 6 and are a Cree-speaking group of the Plains Cree Y-Dialect. My mother and maternal grandparents are from Goodfish Lake First Nation. I want to acknowledge my paternal grandparents as they both are from Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. The Sioux Valley Dakota Nation speak the Dakota language.

I live in Tsúūt'ínà Nation with my beautiful family. My husband (Sikòlá, 'My husband') is Declan Starlight from Tsúūt'ínà Nation from the Starlight family. I have two children, my daughter (Siíts'a, 'My daughter') Jewel Starlight who is nine years old and my son (Siiza, 'My son') Mark Starlight who is four years old. My brother Brendon Crane (Sishitlá, 'Younger Brother') is also from Tsúūt'ínà Nation with his family Noelle (Sinidàlí, 'Sister-in-law'), Cooper (Siízá, 'My son'), and Aiyana (Siíts'a, 'My daughter'). My mother (Sóó, 'My mother') Pearl Crane who is from Goodfish Lake First Nation married my late father (Sitò, 'My father') Mark Crane from Tsúūt'ínà First Nation.

I want to acknowledge my grandparents and ancestors, my paternal grandparents (Sisàghá, 'My grandfather') Leonard Crane (Kinyewakan, 'Flying Holy') (Ninàghá Mik'iyijà, 'Bear Coat/Skin') and (Sisúh, 'My grandmother') Rose Crane (Unphanha win, 'White Elk Skin Woman') from Tsúūt'ínà First Nation and Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. My late maternal grandparents (Sisàghá, 'My grandfather') Victor Hunter (Paspasko) and (Sisúh, 'My grandmother') Emily Hunter (Memnook) from Goodfish Lake First Nation. My paternal great-grandparents (Sisàghá, 'My grandfather') George Baptist-Crane and (Sisúh, 'My grandmother') Daisy Crane (Crowchild) from Mini Thni Nakoda Sioux and Tsúūt'ínà First Nation. Ada Wasicuna and James Kinyewakan (Fly Holy) from Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. My maternal

great-grandparents (Sisàghá, ‘My grandfather’) Paul Memnook (Papanow) and (Sisúh, ‘My grandmother’) Edith Memnook (Mamanow, Jackson) from Goodfish Lake and Saddle Lake First Nations.

I am a Tsúūt’ínà woman, mother, wife, daughter, sister, learner, teacher, scholar, mentor, leader and cultural woman. I am the Language and Culture Executive Director of Tsúūt’ínà Nation. I am and will always be Tsúūt’ínà Dene proud. My Tsúūt’ínà worldview and spirit flows through me like the water we taste, air we breathe, fire we touch, and wind we feel. My spirit in being Tsúūt’ínà is known to be loving, fearless, inspiring, and compassionate. I connect through my worldview the most through our unique Tsúūt’ínà culture, language, lands, traditions, values, beliefs, and history.

My cultural roots began with the connection to my language. My earliest memory of my language and culture was when I was fortunate enough to live with my maternal grandparents and great-grandmother which were all Cree fluent speakers. They spoke Cree fluently around me at a young-age, I was seven or eight years old at the time. I remember my grandfather always preparing to go hunting and butchering his kill afterwards. I also remember my great grandma speaking Cree fluently while I was admiring her playing cards on her bed or having me to rub her feet with peppermint lotion (it is these memories that I will remember forever). Another one of my earliest memories of me listening to language was in elementary school. I attended Chiila Elementary School in Tsúūt’ínà Nation. At the time our language was taught by our fluent speakers. Our language was always taught within our Nation schools, of which I am very proud and fortunate.

I began my language journey in 2011, starting as a Computer Technician at the Tsúūt’ínà Gūnáhà Institute after graduating high school as Valedictorian in 2009. Having attended Nation schools all my life, I value their role in shaping who I am today as a proud 'rez kid'. Although I

initially knew little about my job, it allowed me to translate Elders' interviews into the Anthology Series—highlighting Tsúūt'ínà stories, culture, and traditions. This work sparked my interest in our community's legacy, making me appreciate the importance of my Tsúūt'ínà identity, relationality, reciprocity, respect, and responsibility.

During my language journey, I have experienced generational trauma by witnessing addiction to drugs and alcohol by my parents and my own experience in facing addiction. Neither of my parents raised me in a traditional home with language and culture, besides hunting and attending church. However, until this day, I acknowledge my parents' strength, guidance, and understanding for overcoming the trauma that they endured. I remember the number of times when I wanted to quit the language work. I believe the language work and language learning have saved my life to this day. I believe that language is healing, forgiving, and understanding. My language and culture saved my life. Whenever I feel like quitting or giving up with the weight of our language dying, I always remember my inner strength, my children, my ancestors, my language, and my Nation – that the language work is not only for me but for everyone in my world who needs it the most.

Healing through language and culture needs to be shared more, as I've endured challenges throughout my journey. My language is what grounded me through times of struggle and despair. I was tested throughout my master's project; there were times where I wanted to give up and surrender. I've doubted myself in ways where I didn't see myself completing my master's project. I've felt defeated with anger, depression, heartbreak, grief, loss, and generational trauma. I've questioned why at this time in my life are things falling apart? When things got to the worst when I was deep into depression I've prayed with my medicines and asked for forgiveness. I've prayed in my language to Naàtò (“Creator”). Forgiveness is the hardest to endure I've experienced. When I've prayed, I've felt the light and love of my language

leaving my voice which then reminded me that everything would be okay, like my ancestors and loved ones were standing right behind me and reassuring me to not be so hard on myself and that we are all human beings. Basically, telling me to get back on my feet and keep going. I've repeatedly told myself, *gūmīsīstiy* ("I keep going") or in Cree (which reminds me of my late Grandma Emily) *ahkamiymok* ("Keep trying"). So, how do we move through this process of healing? The loss of language due to colonization, the loss of family, and the loss of self. How do we move through this process in Indigenous Language Revitalization work? We must continue to speak the love and light of our languages to continue our journeys – healing the language spirit is what will heal us.

I was intrigued in learning more of who we are as *Tsūūt'ínà*. The importance of identity resonated with me. Within my job as a Computer Technician, I also learned more of who we are as *Tsūūt'ínà* through documentation work. I was a Computer Technician for two years (2011-2013). Then I was promoted to an Administrative Assistant at the time to start assisting with administrative duties. I was the Admin Assistant for one year (2013-2014) then was promoted to Executive Assistant. I was the Executive Assistant for five years (2014-2018). During this time as the Executive Assistant, I decided I want to return to university again. Within my employment at *Tsūūt'ínà Gūnáhà* we have completed various training courses, two programs through the University of Calgary, one *Tsūūt'ínà* Language and Culture Certificate and one Summer Semester Program at the University of Alberta. Later, in 2019, we also completed a Certificate in Indigenous Language Revitalization (ILR) at the University of Victoria (UVic).

In my educational journey, I returned to Mount Royal University when I was the Executive Assistant. First, I returned to General Education to upgrade into university levels and at that time I decided to pursue the Bachelor of Arts program—Anthropology. The reason for this program was to study human societies and cultures and their development, simply, the study of

what makes us human—in linguistics (language), cultures, societies, human behaviour, human biology, in both past and present, and in archaic humans. I was already so interested at the time to learn more about other cultures because I was learning ours. I believe that pursuing higher education and learning about other cultures will benefit my language and culture work at Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhá.

After my Executive Assistant position, I was the Interim Director for the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhá Institute, then applied for the Director position for the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhá Institute, then was the Director for three years (2018-2021). In the middle of my language journey, I cannot forget to mention, I had two beautiful children and got married. Working full-time, going to school full-time and raising a beautiful family full-time. In 2022, the Tsúūt'ínà Language and Culture Executive Director position opened. I applied for it. I was hesitant at first because I did not want to leave my language family. But I knew I would support the language and culture at a higher level in this position. So, I applied for the position and was the successful candidate. Now, I am the Executive Director since 2022 to the present. I graduated from Mount Royal University in 2024 and started my Master's degree in the summer of 2024 at University of Victoria in Indigenous Language Revitalization.

My lesson learned and still learning through my language journey that I have faced was that I realized the difference between language work and language learning. I need to focus more on my language learning. The language work is important - we accomplished many great successes at Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhá and went through many challenges as well. However, I need to focus on my language learning - which includes learning and teaching my family: healing through language, culture, and ceremony for myself and to take care of myself more. Self-care is important and essential (Manatowa-Bailey, 2024). Establishing and creating that work-life balance is what I am still learning and advocate for. Every time I have felt like I was not doing

enough or lost in language work, I felt that our culture and ceremony guided me on my journey. If it was not for the power of our prayers and the language in our prayers—whenever I felt hopeless and could not keep going, I prayed. Our language has uplifted and guided me to be on the path I am today, and I thank Creator (“Nato”) for every milestone.

Since I started working with the Tsúūt’ínà Gūnáhà Institute (Tsúūt’ínà Language Program) for Tsúūt’ínà Nation in 2010, I have gained knowledge of our language learning, culture revitalization, self-identity, and healing. Before I started my language learning journey with the Tsúūt’ínà Gūnáhà Institute, I was never raised in a traditional way or by Tsúūt’ínà fluent-speaking parents. And I never cared for my identity as a Tsúūt’ínà ts’ikúwá (“Tsúūt’ínà woman”). However, since my language learning journey with the Tsúūt’ínà Gūnáhà Institute, my life has been on a healing journey from the effects of intergenerational trauma within my families. I started gaining more knowledge of who I am, learning traditional protocol, sitting in ceremony, and speaking our language. I have become proud of who I am and where I come from.

Importantly, with my position in my Nation and my educational background in Anthropology, Linguistics, and Indigenous Language Revitalization. I wanted to develop a *Tsúūt’ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànisha Post-Secondary Program* for my Nation, and hopefully in time to develop a Master’s and PhD degree programs. I would like to see the Program start in our Manyhorses High School as a requirement class for the students to start learning about Indigenous Language Revitalization or becoming future Language and Culture Instructors, which will then lead the students to a Post-Secondary Program as they complete their General Education Diplomas. Our Nation and Language Program does offer School Language Programming; however, for a Succession Plan for our students and youth, I would love for them to grow into future Language Activists and Language and Culture Instructors. The goal of the program is to foster our young adults to give them the skills to follow a path of regeneration of

Language Activists and Language and Culture Instructors. Our Nation School Instructors would be our people teaching our youth, all in our Tsúūt'ínà Way of Life.

I am guided in my Tsúūt'ínà language and culture journey by a purposeful commitment to preserving our Way of Life in every respect. *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program* has always been a dream of mine ever since I started my educational journey. I believe our Education is a door to success in the regeneration of revitalizing our languages and cultures, which we have lost from past generations due to the language and culture loss caused by the effects and trauma of Residential and Day Schools. We were always here and we will continue to take back what is ours—our languages, cultures, protocols, traditions, lands, waters, beliefs, values, and history. We are Diná-tii (“real people/First Nations”).

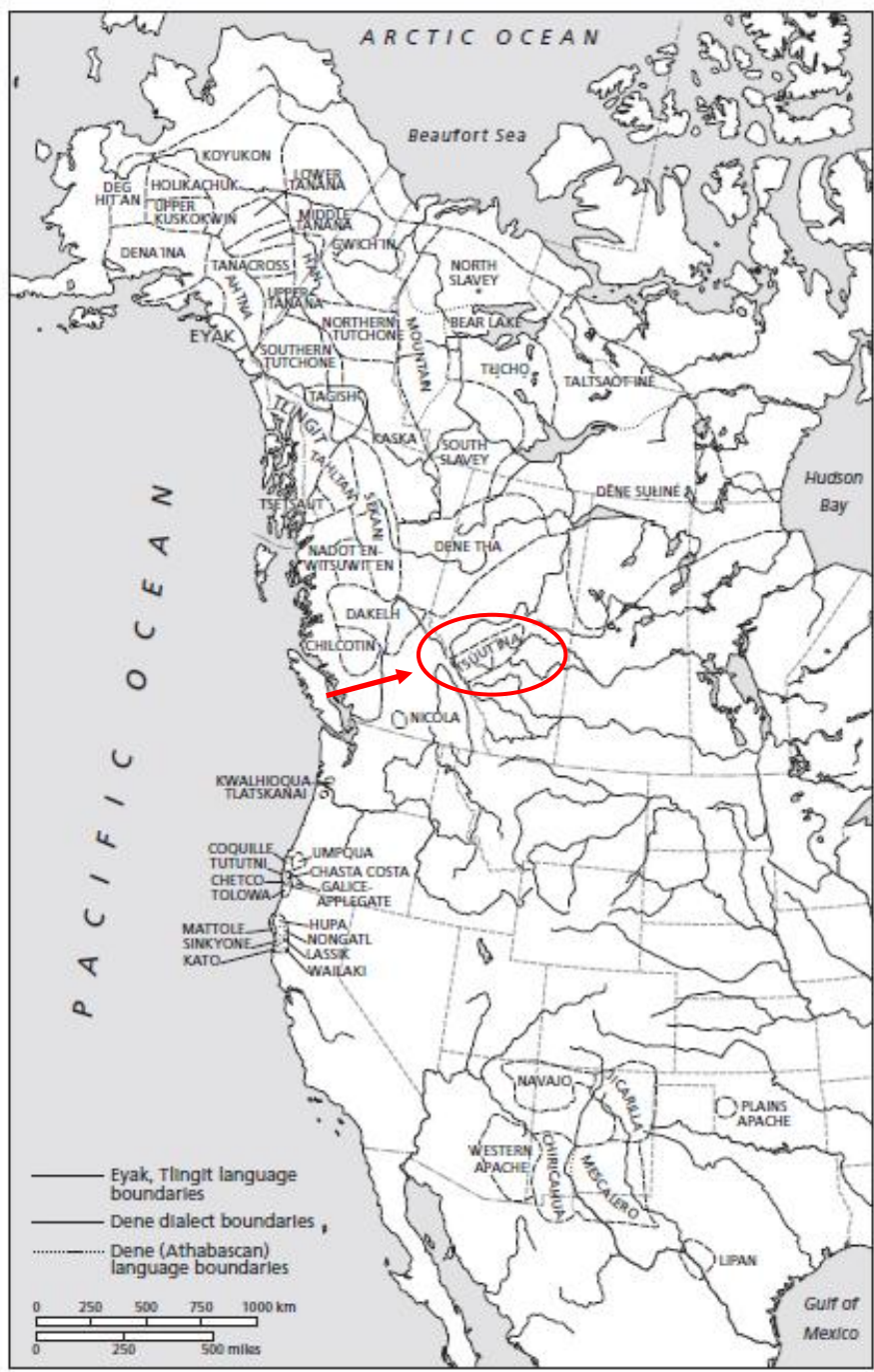
Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà (“Tsuut'ina Language”)

The Tsúūt'ínà First Nation is a sovereign people and a signatory of Treaty Number 7. They are the sole Dene-speaking community within the Treaty 7 Territory, with Tsúūt'ínà recognized as their official language. This language represents a unique and distinct branch of the broader Dene Language Family. Despite external cultural and linguistic influences throughout Treaty 7 Territory, the Tsúūt'ínà have preserved both their language and diverse cultural traditions to this day.

Figure 1 illustrates the Dene Language Family, which includes Tsúūt'ínà. Tsúūt'ínà stands out as the only isolated Dene language group within Treaty 7 Territory in Alberta, surrounded by prairies and Rocky Mountains, alongside the Blackfoot and Nakoda Sioux peoples. The Dene people have experienced many migrations and separations over thousands of years. Stories of Tsuut'ina separation before contact are similar to those from other Dene groups. After separating from the larger Dene tribe, the Tsuut'ina people settled on the prairies and adopted a Plains Indian way of life. Despite these changes in location and lifestyle, the Tsuut'ina have managed to preserve their unique language up to the present day.

Figure 1.

Image of Dene Language Family (Rice & de Reuse, 2017)



Traditionally, the Tsúūt'ínà worldview is holistic, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all life forms and regarding life as sacred. Tsúūt'ínà Ways of Being, Knowing, and Doing have played a significant role in supporting the well-being and survival of the Nation. Central to the Tsúūt'ínà perspective are kinship, family, and community, which are held in the highest esteem. The roles of Head Chief and Minor Chiefs are shaped by their service to the community, with cooperation and mutual assistance recognized as essential for communal survival. Today, Tsúūt'ínà culture remains grounded in a strong connection to the land, language, songs, ceremonies, societies, traditions, values, beliefs, and relationships.

Historically, as Tsúūt'ínà, our ancestors developed essential skills to endure both harsh winters and hot, dry summers. Survival was achieved through adherence to the Tsúūt'ínà worldview, a perspective shaped by lessons derived from the Creator. These teachings were intended to be transmitted across generations. The essence of this guidance is preserved within Tsúūt'ínà gūnáhà.

Traditionally, everything is interconnected, including the child and the gūnáhà. The child is at the center, absorbing and reflecting the gūnáhà, which shapes their understanding of life. Gūnáhà cannot exist in isolation; it relies on each child to carry it through all stages of life. Without gūnáhà, the child's identity and spirit cannot fully develop.

Speaking and revitalizing Tsúūt'ínà gūnáhà is more than just an activity or a choice—it embodies the very essence of Tsúūt'ínà life. Through the language, the community preserves self-identity, self-respect, connections to the Creator, the land, natural law, kinship, values, beliefs, and the entire Tsúūt'ínà worldview.

Tsúūt'ínà gūnáhà teachings can only be fully understood through revitalization of the gūnáhà. Elders remind us that everyone is a lifelong learner, and every Tsúūt'ínà holds a sacred role in this journey. Practicing our teachings, values, and beliefs is both our responsibility and

birthright. As *gūnáhà* is a gift from the Creator, it should not be withheld; anyone wishing to speak or help preserve the language will be taught.

In present day, the Tsúūt'ínà language is at a critical state with language loss and loss of first-language speakers. Today, the Tsúūt'ínà Nation currently has twelve fluent speakers with a membership population of over 2,500 citizens and it can be expected to grow exponentially over the coming years. With only twelve fluent speakers of the Tsúūt'ínà language remaining and the youngest recognized speakers being 80 years old, the number of fluent speakers is less than approximately 0.48% of the population. That means fewer than half one percent of Tsúūt'ínà Nation citizens are first-language speakers – an extremely low level for ensuring continued language transmission (Ethnologue, n.d.).

Consequently, the Tsúūt'ínà language can be categorized as moribund (Ethnologue, n.d.). For 45 years the Tsúūt'ínà had high expectations for a collaborative effort to preserve the language. This effort and all consecutive efforts have endured challenges and successes to change the rate of proficiency for Tsúūt'ínà Nation. The Tsúūt'ínà Nation's language attitude shifted towards language revitalization. Our language lives in our governance and leadership by our Head Chief and Minor Chiefs and the Nation has drafted a Tsúūt'ínà Language Act. Our language is tied to sovereignty, not just culture, and our language is a tool of nationhood, not just heritage.

Importantly, I have to mention that there have been many efforts to save the Tsúūt'ínà language. As highlighted in my introduction, in 1972, fluent Elder speakers Harley Crowchild, Ronald Dodginghorse, and Bruce Starlight developed a proposal for language programming. They realized that the Tsúūt'ínà language was quickly fading away. With the assistance of the University of Calgary and Dr. Eung-Do Cook, they were able to standardize the Tsúūt'ínà orthography and begin teaching the linguistic system of writing Tsúūt'ínà.

The Tsúūt'ínà Nation's Schools were a place to teach language and culture. The schools started in portable trailers in the late 1980's. In 1995, Chiila Elementary School was built, and the Junior/Senior High School was built in 1997. At the time, the Tsúūt'ínà language teachers were our Elder fluent speakers.

Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà (Tsúūt'ínà Language House) was established in 2008 by a group of concerned individuals. The program was led by Tsúūt'ínà language and culture advocate and fluent speaker, Elder Dr. Bruce Starlight. The new teachers were young adults and second-language learners who taught the language as they learned from the Elders. Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà has made it a priority for documentation since the early years of the program. Dr. Christopher Cox, a former student of Dr. Bruce Starlight made documentation, linguistics, and grammar development a priority to document and preserve the language for many generations to come. Both, Dr. Bruce Starlight and Dr. Christopher Cox continue to strive to support the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà for documentation as one of the influential pieces of the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà framework.

Today the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà is the site of the Tsúūt'ínà language revitalization program for the Tsúūt'ínà Nation. We are located within the Tsúūt'ínà Nation beside our Tsúūt'ínà Cultural Museum. We recently received our new building which is now called the Tsúūt'ínà Language House. In terms of programming, our Language House currently has 37 staff members, categorized as Administration Staff, School Language Programming Staff, and Community Language Programming Staff. We also host our Tsúūt'ínà Language and Culture/Traditions Committee which compromises seven fluent speakers, including one chairman and six committee members and our administrator.

Our framework includes five components: revitalization, documentation, fluent speakers, governance, and our well-being in the Tsúūt'ínà language. Our framework guides the planning,

implementation, and sustainability of language work within the Tsúūt'ínà Nation. It reflects a community-defined approach that recognizes Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà as foundational to identity, governance, cultural continuity, and collective well-being.

Our programming is divided into different areas of program delivery such as school language programming, community language programming, resource development, language and culture curriculum development, proficiency development, documentation and orthography development, and our language and culture/traditions committee. Our Language House has grown exponentially from 2008 until today; we grow from assessing our programming and how we can deliver successful programming to our Nation.

Nisk'adàts'inístóní Idikidà (“Research Questions”)

This research explores the development of a *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program* aimed at supporting second-language learners and facilitating additional language learning in a post-secondary setting, with the goal of producing proficient Tsúūt'ínà language speakers. My research question that guides this work include:

How can a post-secondary program contribute to and support the Tsúūt'ínà Language Revitalization (ILR) efforts, and what have I learned from the research that will aid others in these ILR initiatives?

My research approaches Indigenous language revitalization efforts in a Tsúūt'ínà context and supports other ILR initiatives. The post-secondary Tsúūt'ínà language program which I describe below significantly supports Tsúūt'ínà Language Revitalization (ILR) efforts by offering a culturally grounded and adaptable framework for adult learners, combining individualized assessment, community engagement, and both traditional and technology-enhanced methodologies. Immersive experiences with Fluent Speakers, Elders, and participation in cultural ceremonies foster language retention and identity, while hybrid learning models address diverse learner needs and schedules. Research underscores the importance of tailored learning plans, ongoing evaluation, and drawing from successful Indigenous language revitalization initiatives. These strategies collectively enhance language proficiency, cultural pride, and community involvement, offering valuable insights for other ILR initiatives seeking to revitalize Indigenous languages.

Nìsk'adàts'inístóní Atlak'ayiyá (“Research Bundle”)

The *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program* represents a transformative initiative aimed at preserving and promoting the Tsúūt'ínà language, culture, traditions, and way of life. This research bundle seeks to contextualize and explore the various methodologies, frameworks, and theoretical underpinnings that inform Indigenous language revitalization efforts, with a specific focus on post-secondary education. My research plays a key role in understanding the unique challenges and opportunities associated with Indigenous language revitalization, ensuring that the program is grounded in Indigenous/evidence-based practices and informed by the lived experiences of the Tsúūt'ínà Nation.

The first section will examine Tsúūt'ínà language revitalization in how post-secondary students can achieve language and cultural proficiency. The second section examines how would a post-secondary program contribute to and support Tsúūt'ínà Language Revitalization efforts. In concluding I discuss what have I have learned so far from the research that will aid other Indigenous Language Revitalization initiatives.

Tsuut'ina Gúnàhà Náts'inísjó-hí (“Tsúūt'ínà Language Revitalization”)

This section explores Tsúūt'ínà language revitalization and how post-secondary students can achieve language and cultural proficiency. The Tsúūt'ínà language and culture curriculum guide (2024) supports teachers, learners, youth, students, and the Tsúūt'ínà Nation by preserving and sharing knowledge of the Tsúūt'ínà Way of Life. The curriculum is prepared by our Tsúūt'ínà language staff which includes our language speakers, language teachers, culture instructors and administration staff. The curriculum is accessible to our Tsúūt'ínà Nation programming only, as it is it still in its developmental stages. The curriculum is housed in our Tsúūt'ínà language program and is currently a living document as we evaluate it throughout the

year with our language teachers, culture instructors and language administration staff. The curriculum is designed as a dynamic, nationhood-focused document. It emphasizes seasonal, cyclical learning from early childhood through adulthood and includes cultural teachings. This guide helps track our language program's progress and provides access to language and cultural resources. The Tsúūt'ínà language and culture curriculum guide (2024) provides levels of language and culture proficiency that grow from K-12. For example, within our curriculum we utilize "I can" statements, such as within our water teachings for K level "I can identify water as one of the four elements of life and the language key vocabulary is, ("tu") water, ("tu-tii") real water, ("tsisgo") river , and ("tu chu") ocean/sea/lake". However, our curriculum only reaches up to level 12. Therefore, within my MILR project I grow the curriculum for the post-secondary program level.

Developing our own curriculum is crucial for maintaining the integrity and authenticity of our cultural teachings. It serves as a vital tool in the generational transfer of knowledge, ensuring that our language, traditions, and oral histories are passed down from one generation to the next. With the support and wisdom of our fluent speakers and Elders, who are the keepers of our knowledge and traditions, this curriculum becomes a gift of knowledge that enriches our community and strengthens our cultural identity. The teachings and guidance of our Elders are invaluable, as they provide deep insights into our heritage and offer a foundation upon which we can build a resilient future for our people.

Our Elders are the advisors, visionaries, and guiding philosophers of our language and culture. McEachern (2021), in "Reclaiming the Elder Role of Educator in Higher Education for Alaska Native Elders", presents an example of integrating Elder knowledge and experience into university contexts. The inclusion and recognition of Elder perspectives in academic settings is acknowledged as valuable, though it is not widely practiced. Their model demonstrates how

bringing Elders into universities can support curriculum transformation by incorporating Indigenous knowledge and experiences. According to the article, Elders play a role in generational knowledge transfer, which can contribute to curricular outcomes. Traditionally, Elders have served as knowledge holders within their communities and it's vital to be inclusive in ensuring their knowledge is respected and honoured throughout our academic settings in every capacity.

In relation to this perspective, *Isúh Ánii / As Grandmother Said: Dátl'ishí Ts'iká áa Guunijà / The Narratives of Bessie Meguinis* (2024) is a collection of stories published in the Tsúūt'ínà language. Tsúūt'ínà is considered critically endangered, with fewer than 20 fluent speakers, but this publication aims to encourage and support second-language learners. The volume contains nine traditional stories narrated by Elders Dátl'ishí Ts'iká Bessie Meguinis (1883–1987) and Ninàghá Tsìt'á Willie Little Bear (1912–1989), and retold by Dr. Bruce Starlight, with both English and Tsúūt'ínà translations. The narratives address themes such as creation, migration, separation, animal helpers, major turning points from a Tsúūt'ínà perspective, and descriptions of significant cultural or ceremonial items and practices maintained today. This bilingual collection serves as a resource for language learners, teachers, students, youth, and the Tsúūt'ínà Nation to support the continuation of oral history and preserve the legacies of Elders Bessie Meguinis and Willie Little Bear.

Drawing from a deeply personal and heartfelt experience, *How I Started Teaching the Cree Language* (2016) is an autobiography by Emily Hunter, my late grandmother. She has always been our family's matriarch, language mother, grandmother, teacher, and passionate activist. In her autobiography, my grandmother shares her journey into teaching the Cree language, detailing her early life, where she was born, and her love of school—where her passion for teaching began. For as long as I can remember, she spoke Cree and taught me and my cousins

during our visits to her home. The house was filled with Cree labels, and she used puppets and stuffed animals to teach us. I would often hear her speaking Cree with my grandfather and her sisters. I never imagined being so immersed in such precious moments with her. My grandmother's autobiography has uplifted my language spirit and continues to inspire my own language journey. My lived experiences fuel my commitment to language revitalization and support the methodologies, frameworks, and theories that guide my work.

***Diná-tii Gúnàhà Náts'iniyísjó-hí Post-Secondary Diná-tii Gúnàhà Náts'iniyísjó-hí
("Indigenous Language Revitalization in Post-Secondary Context")***

This section will focus on Indigenous Language Revitalization in a post-secondary context. Wilson (2018), in "Higher Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization", examines the role of higher education institutions in Indigenous language revitalization, with a focus on Canada and the United States. From Wilson's paper, I learned that language revitalization is not achieved through teaching alone, but through creating speakers who actively use the language in daily life. This shifted my thinking toward building a program that centers immersion, relationships with Elders, and pathways for learners to become future parents, teachers, and leaders in Tsuut'ina language use.

The article begins by discussing college-educated young adults as a key demographic in language revitalization efforts. It also describes the College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo as an example of a program that has contributed to Indigenous language proficiency and the growth of language revitalization initiatives. Additionally, the chapter addresses the impact of Tribal Colleges in developing Indigenous language proficiency. Overall, the chapter explores that Indigenous communities in tertiary education programs for ILR can provide support in revitalizing and maintaining home and community use by graduated students who can operate immersion programs with high communicative proficiency.

In comparison, Hornberger, De Korne, and Weinberg (2016) present an ethnographic case study examining the teaching and learning of Lenape, an endangered Indigenous language, within a university setting in Pennsylvania. Their study highlights how both Native and non-Native participants engage in the process of language reclamation through a participatory, communicative approach, focusing not only on linguistic competence but also on fostering awareness of Indigenous identity, history, and place. The authors argue that this model of collaborative, locally situated education offers a valuable alternative to traditional academic approaches that often commodify or essentialize endangered languages.

Through classroom practices, students come to critically reflect on the relationships between language, culture, and place, moving beyond essentialist discourses and embracing more fluid understandings of language ownership and use. The study underscores the potential of higher education as a space for fostering meaningful Indigenous language reclamation when guided by community-oriented goals and participatory pedagogies.

Equally important, Hornberger and De Korne (2018) examine the complex role of formal education in Indigenous language revitalization, highlighting both the historical harm schools have caused through exclusionary language policies and their potential as powerful sites for reversing language shift. They argue that successful ILR in schools depends on context-specific factors, including supportive policies, collaboration with communities, culturally responsive pedagogy, and shifts in language ideologies. While models like immersion programs and language nests have shown promise, the authors emphasize that education alone cannot sustain revitalization without broader societal support. They underscore the need for partnerships beyond schools and advocate for practices that align with Indigenous cultural and linguistic priorities, recognizing that revitalization is a long-term, ongoing struggle shaped by sociopolitical conditions.

In the context of partnerships and collaboration within Indigenous Language Revitalization programming at the post-secondary level, my experience with Tsúut'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà and the University of Victoria illustrates the value of such alliances. Together, we established a partnership to advance ILR efforts through the Certificate in Indigenous Language Revitalization (CILR) offered from 2019 to 2021 in my community. Throughout program administration, it became clear that there was a strong need for continued language programming; our language speakers, teachers, and staff played active roles throughout this process. Participants completed Tsúut'ínà language proficiency courses alongside other relevant ILR courses, resulting in the attainment of a two-year certificate.

The progress observed in language proficiency and the commitment demonstrated by both speakers and instructors have been remarkable. This experience underscored the importance of ongoing, year-round post-secondary programming to facilitate continuous assessment and improvement of language delivery for intermediate to advanced learners. The University of Victoria's Indigenous Language Revitalization program in the Faculty of Education sets an important precedent, offering robust programming, resources, and expertise. Its support extends to Indigenous communities globally, facilitated by language activists and advocates dedicated to revitalizing and sustaining Indigenous languages (University of Victoria, n.d.).

In a finding related to higher education, *The Natoonikew Aansaamb: Searching Together for Learning and Resurgence* is a 2022 collection of papers from the University of Calgary Conference on post-secondary learning (Cortes et al., 2023). Various authors share perspectives on Indigenous post-secondary education, offering valuable insights for research on reconciliation and decolonization in programs, courses, and institutions. Their scholarship emphasizes Ways of Knowing, Doing, Connecting, and Being, providing examples of how educators, institutions, and communities can collaborate to nurture learning and advance reconciliation in higher education.

This important volume emerged from the collaborative efforts at the University of Calgary's conference, which brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, educators, and community leaders dedicated to transforming the landscape of post-secondary education. The collected works explore a broad range of topics, including the integration of Indigenous pedagogies and knowledge systems into curricula, strategies for supporting Indigenous students and faculty, and case studies examining successful institutional initiatives toward decolonization.

Contributors discuss the challenges faced in resisting and dismantling colonial structures within academia, while also highlighting opportunities for building meaningful partnerships that honour Indigenous voices and traditions. By weaving together personal narratives, research findings, and practical recommendations, the book serves as both an academic resource and a call to action, inspiring educators and institutions to prioritize equity, respect, and resurgence in their pursuit of reconciliation within higher education.

Sustaining Language Use: Perspectives of Community-Based Language Development (Lewis & Simons, 2016) is a book that highlights community-based language development concerning a number of aspects of language development, including a section on the characteristics of community-based language development as a holistic process. From personal experience, I've examined community-based language development as holistic, meaning that community-based language development emanates from the community, and that the Nation makes the decisions based on the community's needs leaning towards realistic outcomes for the purpose of the next generations. The section examines the needs of the significant characteristics of community-based language development: it is holistic; it is results based; it works from the inside out and from the bottom up; it is language-aware; and it is empowering. This section compares support for higher education programs within communities and First Nations,

emphasizing the importance of responding to holistic, community-driven needs by listening closely and delivering swift results or supporting community-based language initiatives.

Nisk'adàts'inístóní Atlak'ayiyá?í Misk'ágúnit'á?í (“Research Bundle Conclusion”)

The research and examples discussed provide valuable insights and strategies that can be adapted and applied to other Indigenous language revitalization initiatives, highlighting the transformative power of education in nurturing and sustaining Indigenous culture. Successful Indigenous language revitalization efforts require the collaboration of educational institutions, supportive policies, and community partnerships. This holistic approach ensures that Indigenous languages and cultures are not only preserved but also thrive, fostering a sense of identity and continuity for future generations.

It is important to note that language and culture are intertwined, and everyone has their own interpretation on the relationship between language and culture. For me, diyí niihigunáhà idùwàt'a ùwa diyí Tsúūt'ínà ùwa dini gù idùwàt'a (“when you lose your language, you lose your culture and your identity”). Tsúūt'ínà ùwa niihigunijà átlàstlaka (“Culture and language are intertwined”), Niihigunijà dú?águshíshòt'a Tsúūt'ínà ádi (“You cannot learn the language without the culture”), Ûwa Tsúūt'ínà águshíshòt'a niihigunijà ádi (“You can't learn the culture without the language”). I received this teaching at the beginning of my language journey and I've been learning that it would take a lifelong journey to understand the relationship between language and culture. Until today, I've learned that language cannot survive without culture and culture cannot survive without language. I feel that I am in the infancy stages of my language learning journey when I learn our culture, traditions, values, beliefs, knowing, and being. There are many teachings within our worldview that I need to continue to learn in order to understand. There is no end goal to this journey. Language and culture is embedded within our worldview: for example, you learn within the womb of your mother until you transition into the spirit world.

Our Earth journey has many teachings before we transition with our ancestors. Our language spirit is a beautiful gift we cannot give up on.

Namidàgúts'ist'iní Kàsi úwà Namigúts'ist'iní Kàsi (“Methodology and Methods”)

Naàhinájùnà isíla (“all my relations-with”). I am rooted at the belly button, the womb that carried me, and the womb that carried my mother and so forth. I belong to a strong lineage of strong matriarchs who have led the path with a strong belief and wisdom of beauty of Creation, a belief with purpose, understanding, love, and compassion. Without my ancestor’s guidance, love, understanding, and wisdom, I would not be able to bring my epistemological approach forward in a good way for myself, my people, and my children’s children.

I take a methodological approach that starts with who I am as Tsúūt'inà, Tsúūt'inà ts'iká (“woman”), mother, wife, granddaughter, daughter, sister, friend, mentor, and leader. These are methodologies that have influenced my work and working within Tsúūt'inà naahínànísha (“Tsúūt'inà Way of Life”), land, natural law, values, beliefs, ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. My ontology is who I am today, my upbringing, livelihood, childhood, and adulthood. When I think about relations and my ancestors, I think about my mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and great-great grandmother. Their resilience in language, culture, way of knowing, being, doing, and valuing come to mind when it comes to language resurgence work. My grandma and great grandma are role models in my language work. And I must share a quote, as my great grandmother Mamanow (“Edith Memnook”) shares “If you have your language, use it – if you don’t, learn it”. This quote resonates with me as I am doing the language work and it is a gentle reminder that my grandmother and great grandmother have already paved a way to continue language work. The love and compassion of the language work already started for you when you did not know it was already started for you. Now to continue the language work my ancestors have started and to continue passing it down to my children and their children. One day our languages would not need saving, we would just be doing without knowing.

In relation and respect to an academic methodological approach, my methodology takes from brilliant Indigenous researchers. Kathy Absolon (2022) in *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know: Indigenous re-Search Methodologies*, describes the petal flower framework which is created for a wholistic Indigenous way of coming to know and what we bring to search. Absolon's petal flower framework guides my ongoing search journey, just as she intended for her own research process. Another Indigenous researcher, Jo-Ann Archibald (2008), in *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* discuss the role of storytelling. Storytelling is another approach in my research with the wisdom of Fluent Speakers, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers. The program that I have created integrates storytelling and oral traditions as essential teaching tools, grounding the curriculum in ancestral knowledge, lived experiences, and community values. Shawn Wilson (2008), in *Research is Ceremony* examines Indigenous research methodology focusing on the importance of maintaining accountability to relationships. Wilson's research supports my approach in my research on relational accountability in my search journey. And lastly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, highlights important perspectives in research and explores their origins and development. Smith's research supports my approach in research by encouraging me to think more critically from my perspective in a research landscape that honours who I am.

My methods included relational accountability through site visits to other Indigenous post-secondary programs—such as University nuhelot'ine thaiyots'į nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills (Crane-Starlight, personal observation, February 5, 2026), and W̱SÁNEĆ College (Crane-Starlight, personal observation, October 21, 2025) - as part of an in-person review. The main method used is literature review, adaptation, and referencing our Tsúüt'ínà language and culture curriculum, which I summarize in an appendix. My project aims to build on this curriculum and develops a new framework for a program currently unavailable in Tsúüt'ínà. While the

foundation and living document exist, the Tsúūt'ínà Language and Culture Post-Secondary Program does not, so methods and methodologies must be tailored to my objectives.

Regarding my methods, the proposal for the Tsúūt'ínà Language and Culture Post-Secondary Program is based on my extensive experience within the Tsúūt'ínà language program, where I have served in various capacities including Director, as well as Executive Director for Language and Culture within my Nation. Although I have previously submitted proposals for language programming, the development of the Tsúūt'ínà Language and Culture Post-Secondary Program has highlighted the need for comprehensive planning and careful consideration of multiple facets involved in program delivery.

This project was guided by a Tsuut'ina-centered approach that recognizes language, culture, and identity as interconnected and grounded in relational ways of knowing, being, and doing. The development of the post-secondary Tsuut'ina language and culture program proposal was rooted in respect, responsibility, and alignment with community priorities. The need for the program was identified through lived experience in language education, as well as professional knowledge of gaps in existing programming within the Nation, particularly in relation to language revitalization, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and the preparation of future speakers and teachers.

The proposal was developed through an applied and experience-based process informed by my background in education, language teaching, and curriculum development. This included drawing on knowledge of Indigenous language revitalization approaches—such as immersion, oral-based learning, and master-apprentice models—as well as familiarity with post-secondary program structures. These approaches were adapted to reflect Tsuut'ina ways of teaching and learning, ensuring that the program remained culturally grounded rather than externally imposed.

The curriculum was designed to integrate language and culture holistically, with an emphasis on progressive language acquisition and oral proficiency. Cultural teachings, including relationships to land, kinship systems, and seasonal practices, were embedded throughout the program. Teaching methods prioritize immersion, repetition, storytelling, and experiential, land-based learning, with the understanding that language is best learned through use, observation, and participation.

The overall program structure, including course sequencing, learning outcomes, and delivery approaches, was developed to align both with community needs and post-secondary expectations. Ethical considerations remained central throughout the process, particularly the responsibility to uphold Tsuut'ina protocols and ensure that language and cultural knowledge are approached with respect and care. This work reflects a commitment not only to program development, but to the ongoing strength and continuity of Tsuut'ina language and knowledge systems.

Mits'idà?í úwà Mits'idà?í Ìsdagúná-hí (“Results and Outcomes”)

Through my approaches, I have come to understand the significance of knowledge, relationships, storytelling, and the process of coming to know. This realization stems from my personal experiences and highlights what is necessary for the preservation and revitalization of the Tsúūt'ínà language. For instance, throughout my research journey, I've formed relationships by visiting WSÁNEĆ College, University of Victoria, University nuhelot'ine thaiyots'į nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills and meeting with Elders. Nonetheless, I've been fortunate to leave meaningful footprints within my research process. There were moments when I doubted whether my research bundle was possible without support, but the guidance and encouragement I received proved essential and confirmed I was on the right path. Our Tsúūt'ínà language truly needs the *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànisha Post-Secondary Program*.

As a result in developing a proposal for the *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànisha Post-Secondary Program* this project was guided by a Tsuut'ina-centered approach that recognizes language, culture, and identity as interconnected and grounded in relational ways of knowing, being, and doing. The development of the post-secondary Tsuut'ina language and culture program proposal was rooted in respect, responsibility, and alignment with community priorities. The need for the program was identified through lived experience in language education, as well as professional knowledge of gaps in existing programming within the Nation, particularly in relation to language revitalization, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and the preparation of future speakers and teachers.

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The curriculum was designed to integrate language and culture holistically, with an emphasis on progressive language acquisition and oral proficiency. Cultural teachings, including relationships to land, kinship systems, and seasonal practices, were embedded throughout the program. Teaching methods prioritize immersion, repetition, storytelling, and experiential, land-based learning, with the understanding that language is best learned through use, observation, and participation.

The overall program structure, including course sequencing, learning outcomes, and delivery approaches, was developed to align both with community needs and post-secondary expectations. Ethical considerations remained central throughout the process, particularly the responsibility to uphold Tsuut'ina protocols and ensure that language and cultural knowledge are approached with respect and care. This work reflects a commitment not only to program development, but to the ongoing strength and continuity of Tsuut'ina language and knowledge systems.

The program proposal includes an ethical and relational framework, such as the purpose that is defined within the proposal: specifically, the purpose of the *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program* (2026) is to support a regeneration of Tsúūt'ínà ['gūnáhà'] language speakers rooted in Tsúūt'ínà ['nāāhínàníshā'] our way of life/worldview and culture and to provide an opportunity of learning our language and culture in an academic setting at the post-secondary level. Our Tsúūt'ínà language program (Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà) is always in need of language teachers. Since all of our fluent speakers are Elderly, having them in the classrooms all day is not an option. Our language program developed a program to train second-language learners to become language teachers, with guidance from fluent speakers. The

Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànisha Post-Secondary Program is to strengthen the continuity of the Tsúūt'ínà language, culture, and worldview by supporting learners to become confident speakers, responsible knowledge holders, and active contributors to language revitalization. Through relational, land-based, and culturally grounded learning, the program nurtures personal identity, accountability to community and land, and respect for Tsúūt'ínà laws, protocols, and ways of knowing, ensuring that language and cultural knowledge are carried forward for future generations.

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànisha: Post-Secondary Program Proposal for Tsúūt'ínà Nation is organized to guide readers through a holistic, community-centered vision for language and cultural revitalization in post-secondary education. Beginning with foundational teachings, purpose, and vision, the proposal situates the program within Tsúūt'ínà knowledge systems and priorities. It then outlines student learning goals, program outcomes, and core components, followed by a detailed curriculum framework and course offerings that integrate language, land, worldview, and pedagogy. The document further presents the program's structure, instructional approaches, and assessment methods, along with practical considerations such as delivery, implementation, and budgeting. The following table of contents provides an overview of the key sections that shape and support this comprehensive program design:

- Words by Ts'òōtsākūwá kāk'ā ['Old Ladys Path']
- Dìt'àǵí ['Purpose']
- Nādámíguts'ist'iní Ááwúsàà ['Program Vision']
- Dat'ishí Nátsit'á ['Executive Summary']
- Gúǵì Dat'ishí ['Introduction']
- Áts'isdí-ná Yadàgushótí ['What Students will Learn?']
- Nādámíguts'iyíst'iní ts'i-hí ['Program Outcome']
- Nādámíguts'ist'iní Nādàts'idiyísdlóǵí ['Program Components']
- Tsúút'ínà Gunáhà Nàníst'úní ['Gūnáhà Framework']

- Tsùt'íná Naahínánísha ['Tsùt'íná Our Way of Life Values']
- Ádàguts'isdí-hí Nànistl'únà ['Curriculum Framework']
- Tsùt'íná gūnáhà úwà Náhínīnīshá Mik'asónà Águts'isdí-hí ['Tsuut'ina Language and Culture Lifelong Curriculum Guide']
- Ádàguts'isdí-hí datl'ishà ts'i-dá ['Courses and Course Outcomes']
 - Tsùt'íná Worldview
 - Tsùt'íná Language and Land
 - Tsùt'íná Documentation and Digital Tools
 - Tsùt'íná Second-Language Learning and Pedagogy
 - Tsùt'íná Linguistics and Language Revitalization
 - Tsùt'íná Language Proficiency (Introductory/Beginner) Level 1
 - Tsùt'íná Language Proficiency (Intermediate) Level 2
 - Tsùt'íná Language Proficiency (Intermediate/Advanced) Level 3
- Nàdámíguts'ist'iní Nànistl'únà ùwà Ádàguts'isdí-hí Datl'ishà Didiyismidzí ['Program Structure and Course Sequence']
- Ádàguts'isdí-hí K'asónà ['Instructional Methods']
- Ádàguts'iyísdiní Nìsk'àdàts'inistó-hí ['Assessment and Evaluation']
- Daʔí Guts'idit'ití ['Delivery Method']
- Guts'idit'ití K'àsì ['Implementation Plan']
- Didilí K'ats'inító-hí ['Budget Overview']
- K'àgúnit'áʔí ['Conclusion']
- Mìts'idàʔí ['References']

Góghàʔiditl'ish-ná Datl'ishà (“Curriculum Development”)

A well-crafted curriculum serves as the cornerstone of any successful educational initiative, laying the foundation for meaningful and enduring learning. When designing curriculum, it is crucial to consider not only what will be taught, but also how instruction is structured to achieve meaningful and relational learning outcomes. As Jansen, Underriner & Jacob (2013) emphasize in place-based curriculum, "A place-based curriculum educational

approach grounds curriculum and lessons to students' experiences in local events and places, and acknowledges that learning happens not only in formal educational settings but also outside of school in families and communities. This reinforces connections to one's home, family, community and world." The *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànisha Post-Secondary Program's* curriculum is essential for the program's success and sustainability. It serves as a blueprint for how our Nation's values, natural laws, knowledge systems, and language are passed down to future generations.

I have developed detailed and in-depth outlines for each course in the post-secondary program based on our existing Tsúūt'ínà language and culture curriculum. The existing curriculum has been designed for K-12 using a community-based approach developed by our Elders, Language Teachers, and Language Staff (*Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nasʔagha*, 2024). Therefore, I built the language proficiency aspect of the post-secondary program upon our existing Tsúūt'ínà language and culture curriculum and the structure we will establish for language growth. Each course is specifically designed to prioritize language proficiency as the primary goal. Additionally, learning outcomes, course objectives, guidelines, policies, course expectations, rubrics, assessments, and commitments to the course language have been created.

Importantly, as previously mentioned, the *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànisha Post-Secondary Program's* curriculum will be delivered using a community-based approach, drawing from our existing Tsúūt'ínà language and culture curriculum (*Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nasʔagha*, 2024).

This is similar to the framework in Ignace (2016) on the Western Canadian Protocol for Aboriginal Language and Culture (WCPALC):

The Framework views language and culture as inseparable, with language perceived as vital to understanding unique cultural perspectives. In other words,

language is considered a tool that students can use to explore and experience their cultures and the perspectives embedded in their cultures (p. 45).

Our existing curriculum must be revised to also include adult language learning outcomes suitable for a post-secondary program, as the current curriculum is based on K-12 learning outcomes (Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nasʔagha, 2024). We will need to reassess and incorporate post-secondary learning objectives. The curriculum is structured around proficiency levels and views the Tsúūt'ínà way of life cyclically, incorporating seasonal cultural teachings and pedagogies (Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nasʔagha, 2024). A thorough analysis of the existing Tsúūt'ínà language and culture curriculum and its current learning outcomes for the 2025-2026 school year is essential. This evaluation will provide valuable insight into students' language development over the course of the year. It also prompts consideration of whether appropriate assessment methods are being employed within the existing curriculum, highlighting the need to review these practices. Although this process is not part of my initial approach, I may assess the current framework after the implementation of the proposed program, collaborating with Tsúūt'ínà staff to guide future curriculum revisions.

Regarding delivery, I have consulted with our language team about how they have delivered the existing Tsúūt'ínà language and culture curriculum based on a needs assessment. Our language team meet monthly to assess the existing curriculum and to assess each level of classroom delivery and language delivery. Our senior language teaching staff are familiar with specific methods; however, we have been mentoring and recruiting new language teachers. We need to establish a training guide and a more in-depth orientation for them. The Tsúūt'ínà Language and Culture Post-Secondary Program curriculum will be delivered in person and online, so a hybrid model will be appropriate. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have noticed that more adult language learners in our Nation have become comfortable with online language

learning. Our curriculum is the foundation of the post-secondary program, and it is essential to align our living curriculum with credit frameworks and integrate successful assessment tools. The development of the curriculum will shape the spirit, structure, and success of the post-secondary program.

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program aims to preserve the Tsúūt'ínà language, culture, traditions, history, and way of life. Our goal is to support the Tsúūt'ínà people in developing future language-proficient speakers, activists, and instructors of language and culture. The program seeks to promote knowledge acquisition and to continue supporting the growth of language learners in terms of their proficiency. Our long-term vision is to empower Tsúūt'ínà individuals to become the primary instructors in our Nation's schools, from daycare through post-secondary education.

In my research and professional journey, I have been inspired by institutions dedicated to Indigenous language revitalization, like the University nuhelot'íne thaiyots'í nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills, W̱SÁNEĆ College, and the University of Victoria. These organizations are leading efforts to support Nation-led language programs and prepare future language advocates. It is the responsibility of language champions and Nations themselves to foster and launch language initiatives within their communities—to turn aspirations into reality. Numerous support networks exist with a genuine desire to see our languages thrive. Our Indigenous community has many pillars backing these efforts, including the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its 94 Calls to Action, as well as advocates and leaders who urge us to keep speaking our languages despite challenges like Indian Residential Schools, Day Schools, and the Sixties Scoop. As an intergenerational survivor, it is my duty—gifted by our Creator—to help my language flourish again for my Nation. The task of saving my language is mine, but I strive to empower others to

take up this responsibility for their own languages too. This underscores the crucial role of the support systems available to strengthen our Indigenous languages.

Misàgúnit'á?í Datl'ishà (“In Closing”)

Learning Tsúut'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha (‘Tsúut'ínà language and culture’) is a lifelong journey. The *Tsúut'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program* will be an opportunity and a path for future Tsúut'ínà language learners to start or continue their language journeys. I am confident that the post-secondary program will open up other opportunities and visions come to life for our Tsúut'ínà Nation’s long-term language goals and succession plans to create independent, confident, and influential Tsúut'ínà second-language speakers.

Da?í Atlak'ayiyá Ìsgúts'idit'ití (“Next Steps”)

Taking the next steps is crucial to realizing my vision for Tsúut'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha. As I mentioned in my acknowledgement, I have already made a tobacco offering to Tsúut'ínà lands. Now, I am considering what actions are needed to bring this goal closer to reality. With clear purpose and intention, I recognize my responsibility to advance my Masters in Indigenous Language Revitalization project so it can be integrated into our Tsúut'ínà language programming.

Looking ahead, I hope our Tsúut'ínà language and culture curriculum will prioritize advanced language learning to better support higher education. This could include expanding assessment methods and evaluating both language learning and program effectiveness. Additionally, I propose creating an annual Tsúut'ínà language report to share progress within our community and with other Dene and Indigenous communities. Another important step is building our capacity for language and culture instructors. Our community urgently needs to train Tsúut'ínà second-language learners to become future instructors who can continue this essential work. My inspiration comes from my daughter’s dream of becoming a Tsúut'ínà language teacher—her aspiration motivates me to keep striving for our Nation and preserve our language,

just as our ancestors hoped. We are the medicine our ancestors wished for to heal and sustain our language.

Ánists'íí (“Final Thoughts”)

I want to thank my language for healing me in ways that I never thought of, especially when it comes to thinking about the purpose of my master's project. My master's project has taught me ways of knowing, being, and doing. I was challenged mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Language work is hard work. I will continue to fight to make our language survive every single day. I do not want to take any credit for this work because it is collective effort. I couldn't have done the language work without my language family and language Elder mentors – they're truly the heart of our language. They are the ones that carry weight of our language alongside of me and I couldn't have done my masters project without them, if that is working, learning, and teaching the language while raising a family everyday. The emotional stress and weight of pronouncing a phrase wrong but still continuing to teach and learn our language.

I've witnessed and experienced our language program through challenges and successes with working for our language for over 15-years. It's heavy work; however, it's rewarding hearing the language being spoken within our Nation again. I've witnessed from when I first started working on our language program, there was no interest in learning or teaching the language. We started out with a small language family. Fast-forward to now, we have a large language family, we've advocated the importance of learning our language within our Nation and now it seems that everyone wants to learn the language. The language awareness has been growing throughout our Nation, either through school language programming, resource development, and community language programming. We also grew with the support from our Head Chief and Minor Chiefs; we have a portfolio dedicated specifically to language and culture

programming. It's beautiful to witness the transformation unfold. The spirit of our Tsúūt'ínà language has led us to this point, and I am confident we will keep getting stronger.

Gūmīsīstiy ("I will persevere")

Gūmīsítiy ("You persevere")

Dàgūmīsāstiy ("Each and every one of you persevere")

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Ánìsts'í Nàkàdat'ishí (“Appendices”)

Appendix A: Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha: Post-Secondary Program Proposal for Tsúūt'ínà Nation

This appendix includes the full *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha: Post-Secondary Program Proposal for Tsúūt'ínà Nation* to provide additional context and detail supporting this document. The proposal outlines the program's vision, structure, and key components, grounded in Tsuut'ina language and cultural knowledge, and reflects community priorities for language revitalization and long-term capacity building.

Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha: Post-Secondary Program Proposal for Tsúūt'ínà Nation

IED 598: Major Project

Master of Indigenous Education Language Revitlization

University of Victoria

Submitted by: Ts'òòtsākūwá kāk'á

Janelle Crane-Starlight



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Words by Ts'òòtsākūwá kāk'ā ['Old Lady's Path']

Before I start introducing the program, I want to thank our Tsúut'ínà language for guiding me on my educational journey. Without my language I wouldn't be leading this important work for my people. The weight of our language loss has led me to where I am today, and for that, I am truly thankful. As once told by a fluent speaker, "Once our language is saved, our community is saved" - this quote has resonated with me ever since I started my language journey, and it has given me momentum to keep going and persevere [**'gūmīsīstiy'**] no matter the challenges that may come my way for our language [**'nīhīgūnāhá'**].

I was a former staff member of our language program (**Tsúut'ínà Gūnāhà Nás?ághà**) on the Tsúut'ínà Nation for 15 years, and currently am the Tsúut'ínà Nation Language and Culture Executive Director as well as Graduate Student at the University of Victoria in the Master's in Indigenous Language Revitalization Program. I am continuously and passionately working for the Tsúut'ínà language. I envision our Tsúut'ínà people continuing to speak our language in every language domain. I've created programs to support language initiatives to prosper through each language domain, so our language can be heard and spoken anywhere possible. I also support our people to succeed in their educational and language journeys because I truly believe I wouldn't get to where I am if it wasn't for our language [**'nīhīgūnāhá'**]. The program I am about to introduce comes from a place of dedication, reclamation, love, and perseverance. When I've thought about what I've wanted to do for my Masters Project, the first thing that came to mind, was developing a Post-Secondary Program that offers Tsúut'ínà language and culture teachings. It is a language domain we as a Nation haven't really gotten to yet. So, I hope my vision offers you a sense of purpose, identity, love, knowing, being, and way of life.

Gwánìst'ínā-tī ['Thank you']

Ts'òòtsākūwá kāk'ā ['Old Lady's Path']

Dìt'à?í

['PURPOSE']

The purpose of the *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program* is to support a regeneration of Tsúūt'ínà **['gūnáhà']** language speakers rooted in Tsúūt'ínà **['nāāhínàníshā']** our way of life/worldview and culture and to provide an opportunity of learning our language and culture in an academic setting at the post-secondary level. Our Tsúūt'ínà language program (*Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà*) is always in need of language teachers. Since all of our fluent speakers are Elderly, having them in the classrooms all day is not an option. Our language program developed a program to train second-language learners to become language teachers, with guidance from fluent speakers. The *Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program* is to strengthen the continuity of the Tsúūt'ínà language, culture, and worldview by supporting learners to become confident speakers, responsible knowledge holders, and active contributors to language revitalization. Through relational, land-based, and culturally grounded learning, the program nurtures personal identity, accountability to community and land, and respect for Tsúūt'ínà laws, protocols, and ways of knowing, ensuring that language and cultural knowledge are carried forward for future generations.

Nàdàmígu'ts'ist'iní Ááwú'sàà

['Vision Statement']

"The Tsúut'iná Gunáhà úwa Naàhinàníshà Post-Secondary Program ágút'á?í, niìhigunáhà, mádàgunaàzhóní, úwa minist'iyá isila Tsúut'iná wúsá xásaàdáí. Niìhìsgáká úwa gúghàlàsì gimìsgáká idágugishó-gú, niìhigunáhà ígugítá-gú, úwa Tsúut'iná nist'iyá nístis-gú ts'iyinó?í."

-Ts'òòtsākūwá kāk'ā ['Old Ladys Path']

["The Tsúut'iná Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program exists to carry our language, knowledge, and spirit into the future so that our children and their children will know who they are, speak our language, and live in strength as Tsuut'ina people".]

Datł'ishí Nátsitł'á

['Executive Summary']

Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà is central to Tsúūt'ínà identity, inherent rights, and Nationhood. This program is designed by and for the Tsúūt'ínà Nation to ensure language learning occurs within culturally safe, community-governed, and academically recognized structures. By embedding Tsúūt'ínà worldview, land-based learning, and relational accountability into post-secondary education, the program strengthens the long-term sustainability of Tsúūt'ínà language and culture.

Gú?ì Datł'ishí

['Introduction']

Tsúūt'ínà gūnáhà is the heart of our culture, identity, inherent right, and Nationhood. The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program is created for the Tsúūt'ínà Nation to support Tsúūt'ínà-yina ['Tsuut'ina people'] to start and continue their language learning journey through an academic setting. The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program provides the gift of language rooted in our rich and unique culture, traditional knowledge, and practices that build a strong foundation and skills for language and culture revitalization initiatives.



Áts'isdí-ná Yadàgushótí

['What Students will Learn']

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program is a two-year accredited certificate program in the Tsúūt'ínà language and culture, which includes eight courses. The eight courses provide introductory components to build knowledge in the context of these courses listed:

- Tsúūt'ínà Language Proficiency
(Beginner/Introductory) Level 1
- Tsúūt'ínà Language Proficiency (Intermediate) Level 2
- Tsúūt'ínà Language Proficiency
(Intermediate/Advanced) Level 3
- Tsúūt'ínà Worldview
- Tsúūt'ínà Language and Land
- Tsúūt'ínà Documentation and Digital Tools
- Tsúūt'ínà as a Second-Language and Pedagogy
- Tsúūt'ínà Linguistics and Language Revitalization



Nàdàmíguts'iyíst'iní ts'ì-hí

['Program Outcome']

Students of the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program will:

- Advance and embody Tsúūt'ínà language, culture, and worldview through proficient and respectful use of the Tsúūt'ínà language.
- Develop a grounded understanding of Tsúūt'ínà linguistic systems.
- Actively participate in language revitalization, documentation, teaching, and land-based knowledge transmission.
- Utilize ethical documentation practices and adhere to Tsúūt'ínà governance principles.
- Demonstrate responsibility to Tsúūt'ínà people, land, and future generations by applying culturally grounded pedagogies.
- Strengthen personal identity, community relationships, and collective language sustainability.



Nàdàmíguts'ist'iní Nàdàts'idiyísdló?í

['Program Components']

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program is a two-year, eight-course sequence that builds Tsuut'ina language proficiency and cultural competence. Courses cover second-language pedagogy, linguistics, and revitalization, progressing from beginner to advanced levels. Instruction blends in-person, land-based, and online formats, emphasizing cultural protocols, community engagement, and Indigenous language revitalization.

Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nànistł'úní

['Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Framework']

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà Framework guides the planning, implementation, and sustainability of language work within the Tsúūt'ínà Nation. It reflects a community-defined approach that recognizes Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà as foundational to identity, governance, cultural continuity, and collective well-being. The framework positions language revitalization as a shared responsibility and ensures efforts remain aligned with Nation priorities and intergenerational continuity.

Well-being in Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà

Well-being practices play an important role in learning languages. In the Tsúūt'ínà worldview, everything in life is connected, and every living thing is considered sacred. Humans see themselves as just one small part of this larger, sacred circle. The Tsúūt'ínà show respect for all forms of life—on land, in water, in the air, and even in fire—along with their connections to people. They believe natural law takes precedence over laws created by humans. Since language learning can be difficult, taking care of your well-being during the process is also highly valued.

Tsúūt'ínà Fluent Speakers

Tsúūt'ínà Elders and fluent speakers are essential for preserving Tsúūt'ínà gūnáhà, as their knowledge helps keep the language alive.

Governance

The Tsúūt'ínà Language and Culture/Traditions Committee will oversee, advise, and set priorities for language and culture programs within the Tsúūt'ínà Nation.

Revitalization

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà aims to build a strong language revitalization community by combining traditional and modern approaches. Dedicated to sharing Tsúūt'ínà with anyone interested, the organization prioritizes developing new fluent speakers and creating relevant language resources.

Documentation

Documentation is vital for the Tsúūt'ínà language. Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà records, transcribes, and archives audio, video, and written materials, and works on developing and improving the Tsúūt'ínà writing system.



TSÚŪT'ÍNÀ NÁHINÌNISHÀ VALUES

Each and every one pray every day and every night.
Dzīnīsī ùwā it'iyī tlonà tādādāsdli

Respect for four elements given by Creator.
Earth (Nisk'ā), Air/Wind (Mits'isjishi/Nists'i?)
Fire/Sun (Kū Disk'oní/Ch'át'ághá) and Water (Tú-tī)

Chief of Everything – Do not lie. (Don't lie, lead a life that is a truthful and honest path)
Kàyídàfigù

Because you listen, you will become wise.
Íts'izists'iyí dósā, ánágūts'idyónāā áts'it'ishí át'ā

Treasure One Another.
ít'idināschòw.

Have empathy for one another. Have compassion for one another.
Átlòghádàst'ā

You cherish mothers, fathers, and Elders. You will become old in the future.
Gūóó yīnā, gūtò yīnā, ùwà xàlikúwá yīnā dādīnāschòw. Wúsà nīhíní jú āsjóní át'ā

You respect life.
Ts'iyinóó k'āsì ts'idināschòwí át'ā

Do not abuse the land.
Nisk'ā dú ìxilā tāāts'ist'ídí át'ā.

Help each other.
Ást'ídādināsnò

Money is sacred. You do not play with it.
Dídilí ch'ādít'ā?í át'ā. Dúmisnàgūts'iyá-hí át'ā

Children are a gift to us from heaven. You cherish them.
Ts'ídōnáká nāāts'í nāāāts'iyinījī át'ā. Dāgīmīdināschòwí át'ā

Have good thoughts all the time.
Gūjā zá niyīnīdādāsjīzh.

Look out for each other.
Átlòghādāyāsnò

Persevere (Always try in adversity / difficult times).
Dāgūmīsāstiy / Gūmīdāsāstiy

Figure 2
Tsúut'iná Our Way of Life Values

Note. Adapted from "Tsúut'iná Our Way of Life Values," by Tsúut'iná Gūnāhà Nas?agha, 2026. Tsúut'iná Gūnāhà Nas?agha

Ádàguts'isdí-hí Nànistł'únà

[‘Curriculum Framework]

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà ūwā Nāhīnīnīshá Lifelong Curriculum Guide is designed as a resource for Tsúūt'ínà students, educators, language teachers, and new learners interested in the Tsúūt'ínà Way of Life. Learning Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà ūwā Nāhīnīnīshá provides valuable insights into Tsúūt'ínà worldview and traditions, reconnects learners with Elders' wisdom, and strengthens identity and self-esteem. Central to this guide is the recognition that language proficiency is essential to fully engaging with and sustaining the Tsúūt'ínà Way of Life; as learners deepen their proficiency, they gain greater access to cultural knowledge, ways of knowing, and meaningful communication within the community. The guide therefore aims to support the progressive development of language proficiency alongside an understanding of Tsúūt'ínà knowledge and being. The proficiency levels within the guide were developed from a Tsúūt'ínà perspective by Tsúūt'ínà Elders, fluent speakers, language teachers, and language staff to reflect community-defined standards of language growth and to meaningfully assess and support learners on their language journeys.

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà ūwā Nāhīnīnīshá Framework provides a comprehensive representation of the Tsúūt'ínà worldview. Its teachings are holistic in nature, emphasizing integrative learning rather than incremental advancement. At the core of the Framework are Learning Domains, each aligned with seasonal teachings. These domains encompass cultural and language instruction relevant to each season, supported by language units, topics of study, and value systems.

Traditionally, distinct teachings were associated with each season, preparing individuals for subsequent seasonal changes and promoting survival. The cyclical structure of the Framework reflects the Tsúūt'ínà way of life. Another key component, Learning Age Levels, addresses fluency progression from Infancy ("Zààs") through to Distinguished proficiency ("Xálūkùwá-yīná úwà ts'òòkùwá-yīná"), with a strong emphasis on language competency analysis. This approach offers insight into measuring language acquisition and development.

Overall, the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà ūwā Nāhīnīnīshá Framework most effectively illustrates the learner's cyclical growth, paralleling traditional ancestral practices of seasonal learning. Learners may begin at the Infancy stage but continue to expand their understanding throughout their educational journey.

Tsúūt'ínà gūnáhà úwà Náhínīshá Mik'asónà Águts'isdí-hí

['Tsuut'ina Language and Culture
Lifelong Curriculum Guide']

Adult (AGES 18+)
Advanced - Distinguished

Kat'ini uwa Ts'ika

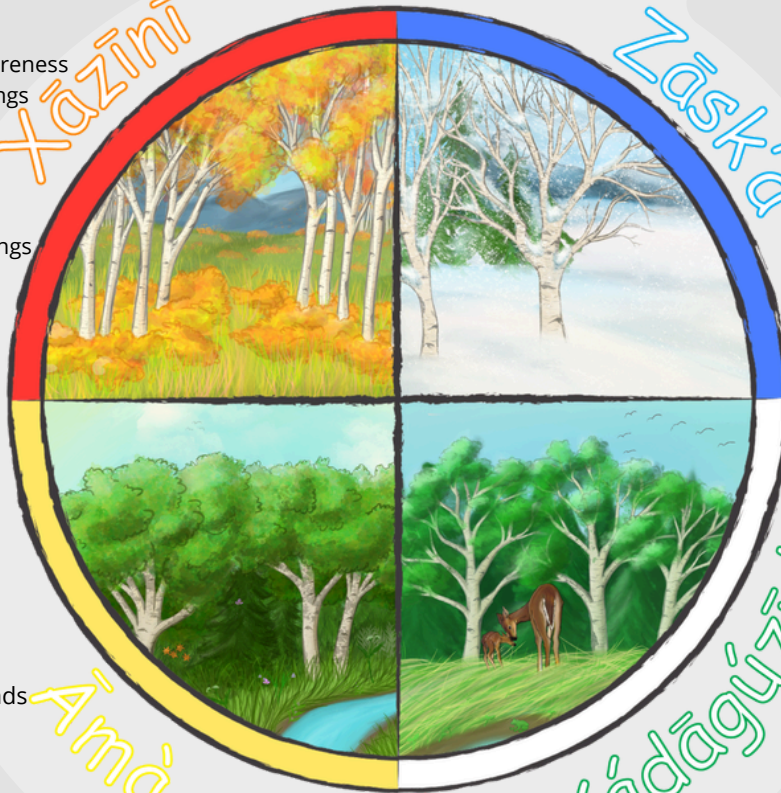
Language:

- Basic Commands
- Verb Phrases
- Kinship
- My Family/My Friends
- Personality Traits
- Likes/Dislikes

Culture:

- Residential School Awareness
- Teepee Raising/Teachings
- Fire Teachings
- Migration
- Buffalo Teachings
- Hunting/Trapping
- Traditional/Modern Songs
- Drumming/Singing
- Outdoor Cooking
- Storing Food
- Harvesting

Xázhini



K-Grade 3 (Ages 3-8)
Infancy - Beginner

Zaas

Language:

- Prayer
- Storytelling
- Numbers
- Handle Verbs
- Coming of Age

Culture:

- Tsuut'ina History
- Dene Language Family
- Storytelling
- Prayer and Spirituality
- Ceremony Protocol
- Winter Teachings
- Snaring/Trapping
- Circle of Life
- Traditional Gender Roles
- Winter Solstice
- Winter Sticks, Moon, Stars, Winter Count

Xásk'á

Language:

- Survival Phrases
- Tsuut'ina Alphabet
- Tsuut'ina Non-Sense Sounds
- Greetings/Leavings
- Getting Ready/Body Parts
- Directions
- Growing/Harvesting

Culture:

- Hide Tanning
- Summer Teachings
- Plant/Medicine Picking
- Summer Ceremonies
- Culture Camp Teachings
- Summer Solstice
- Summer Traditional Games
- Traditional Gardening

Ámá

Xádágu'zidí

Culture:

- Treaties
- Chiefs of Tsuut'ina
- Individual Rights
- Pipe Ceremony/Feast Protocol
- Horse Culture
- Tipi Teachings
- Traditional Food/Feast
- Natural Law
- Birds/Animals
- Traditional Sites/Mapping

Language:

- Introducing Myself
- About Me
- Clothing/Traditional Regalia
- Kinship
- Food/Feast
- Weather/Seasonal/Calendar
- Traditional Places/Animals

GR 9- GR 12 (AGES 14-17)
Intermediate High - Advanced

Kat'ini uwa Ts'ika

GR 9- GR 12 (AGES 14-17)
Intermediate High - Advanced

Kat'ini uwa Ts'ika

Figure 3

Tsuut'ina Language and Culture Lifelong Curriculum Guide

Note. Adapted from "Tsuut'ina language and culture curriculum guide," by Tsuut'ina Gūnáhà Nasʔagha, 2026. Tsuut'ina Gūnáhà Nasʔagha



Ádàguts'isdí-hí datł'ishà ts'ì-dá

['Courses and Course Outcomes']

Tsúūt'ínà Worldview

By the end of this course, learners will be able to articulate, apply, and live out a Tsuut'ina worldview by demonstrating an understanding of Tsuut'ina ontology (Being), epistemology (Knowing), methodology (Doing), and axiology (Valuing), and by valuing Tsuut'ina ways of life through storytelling, identity, kinship, relationships, history, land, traditions, beliefs, and Nationhood, in ways that strengthen personal responsibility, cultural continuity, and collective well-being.

Tsúūt'ínà Language and Land

By the end of this course, learners will demonstrate an integrated understanding of Tsuut'ina language rooted in relationships to the land, including traditional territories and sites, historical and contemporary land use, and future stewardship responsibilities. Learners will apply the Tsuut'ina language to articulate knowledge of seasonal cycles, moon phases, stories, and ethnobotanical practices, while examining political land agreements, laws, and governance systems that have shaped Tsuut'ina lands past, present, and future. Through land-based and community-informed learning, learners will strengthen their cultural identity, linguistic proficiency, and responsibility to uphold Tsuut'ina land knowledge for future generations.



Tsúūt'ínà Documentation and Digital Tools


By the end of this course, learners will be able to support Tsuut'ina language revitalization through respectful documentation practices by conducting speaker-centered recording sessions using digital documentation tools, maintaining secure, organized archives, and upholding Tsuut'ina protocols, copyright, intellectual property rights, and Indigenous data sovereignty.

Tsúūt'ínà Second-Language Learning and Pedagogy

By the end of this course, learners will be able to examine second- and additional-language learning theories and pedagogical approaches as well as apply culturally grounded teaching and learning strategies to support Tsuut'ina language acquisition, address language loss, and contribute to Indigenous language revitalization efforts.

Tsúūt'ínà Linguistics and Language Revitalization

By the end of this course, learners will be able to describe and apply foundational linguistic concepts of the Tsuut'ina language, including its sound system, orthography, word and sentence structure, and grammatical patterns, while situating this knowledge within the historical and contemporary context of Tsuut'ina language use, documentation, and revitalization efforts.



Tsúūt'ínà Language Proficiency (Introductory/Beginner) Level 1

By the end of this course, learners will be able to apply foundational elements of the Tsuut'ina language through a culturally grounded, communicative approach. Emphasis is placed on basic listening and speaking skills, including pronunciation, greetings, simple sentence structures, and essential vocabulary related to self, family, and daily life. Learners are introduced to respectful language use, cultural protocols, and effective strategies for second-language learning while developing an understanding of the relationships among language, identity, land, effects of intergenerational trauma and community.

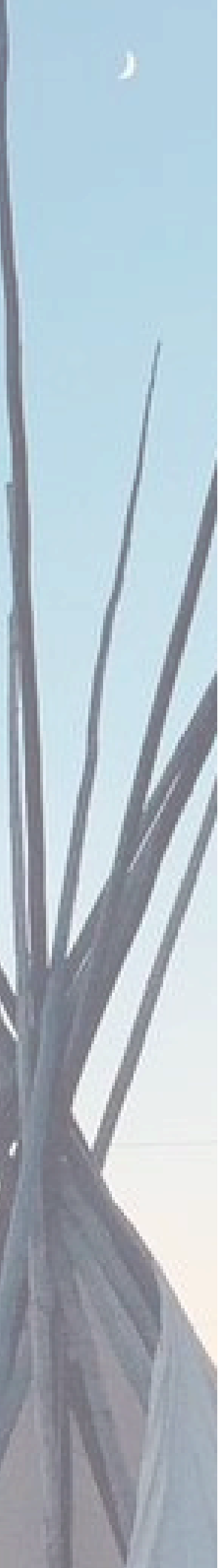
Tsúūt'ínà Language Proficiency (Intermediate) Level 2

By the end of this course, learners will be able to build on foundational language skills to expand their communicative competence and confidence in the Tsuut'ina language. Learners develop increased vocabulary, more complex sentence structure, and the ability to engage in conversations on familiar and community-based topics. Listening comprehension is strengthened through exposure to natural speech, while cultural context, appropriate language, and responsibility within language revitalization remain central.



Tsúūt'ínà Language Proficiency (Intermediate/Advanced) Level 3

By the end of this course, learners will be able to focus on developing greater fluency and depth in the spoken Tsuut'ina language through advanced vocabulary, grammatical structures, and extended discourse. Learners engage with oral narratives, teachings, and unscripted interactions in a variety of social and cultural contexts, demonstrating appropriate cultural protocols and discourse patterns. Emphasis is placed on merging language leadership, community engagement, and planning for continued language growth beyond the classroom.



Nàdàmínguts'ist'iní Nànístł'únà ùwa Ádàguts'isdí-hí Datł'ishà Dìdiyìsmidzí

['Program Structure and
Course Sequence']

The Tsúüt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program offers a two-year, eight-course, thirty-six hours per course sequence designed to build linguistic proficiency and cultural competence in the Tsuut'ina language. Delivered in a hybrid format—including in-person, land-based, and online learning—the program integrates advanced language instruction, linguistics, pedagogy, and cultural protocols. Learners progress from foundational skills to advanced fluency, engaging in oral narratives and community-based activities that support Indigenous language revitalization and leadership.

Nàdàmíguts'ist'iní Nànistł'únà ùwa Ádàguts'isdí-hí Datł'ishà Dìdiyìsmidzí

['Program Structure and Course Sequence']

Program Title:

Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program

Credential Awarded:

Certificate in Tsúūt'ínà Language and Culture

Program Length:

Two (2) Years

Eight (8) Courses

Thirty-Six (36) Hours per course

Delivery Mode:

Hybrid (In-person, land-based, and online)

Program Location:

Tsúūt'ínà Nation (primary site), with online components

Admission Requirements:

1. Tsúūt'ínà Nation citizenship or community membership (priority admission)
2. Minimum age requirement as defined by institutional policy (18 and over)
3. Demonstrated interest in Tsúūt'ínà language and culture
4. Assessment and self-evaluation in Tsúūt'ínà language and culture
5. Graduated from Manyhorses High School (an asset)
6. Graduated Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà 12-Week Program (an asset)
7. Reference Letter from either two (2) academic or professional references
8. Must complete Registration Form
9. Must complete Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program Oath of Commitment Form

Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program Acceptance Letter

(Date)

(Family Name)

(Family Address)

(City, Province, Postal Code)

Subject: Acceptance into the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program

Diyi dzinisi guja (**Family Name**),

On behalf of the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà, we are pleased to inform you that your family has been selected to participate in the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program. We commend your commitment to revitalizing and strengthening the Tsúūt'ínà language within your home and Nation.

Your family's participation in this program is an important step in preserving our language for future generations. As part of this initiative, you will receive and provide:

- A **monthly living allowance of \$2,750** to support your language learning journey.
- Provide an assessment and self-evaluation in Tsúūt'ínà language and culture.
- Provide a Reference Letter from either two (2) academic or professional references.
- Must complete a Registration Form.
- Must complete Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program Oath of Commitment Form.
- Provide Undergraduate Admission Application Fee \$175.
- Upon Completion Graduate Application Fee \$50.

Please confirm your acceptance by (**confirmation deadline date**) by signing and returning the attached Oath of Commitment. If you have any questions, please contact the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà at 403-238-9455 or email at gunahainstitute@tsuutina.com.

Siyìsgāās (Thank you) uwa gumisistiy,

Director of Post-Secondary Program
Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà
Tsúūt'ínà Nation



Registration Form

This application is for the Tsuut'ina Home Language Program and must be submitted on or before **(Date)**.

Personal Information:

Applicant Name: _____

Band #: _____

Date of Birth: (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Marital Status (Please check one):

Single Single Parent Married with Employed Spouse Married with Unemployed Spouse

Dependent Child(ren):

Dependent Full Name(s): _____

Age(s): _____

D.O.B (MM/DD/YY): _____

Band Number(s): _____

About the Program:

- Applications will be accepted and will be placed on a wait list until all applications have been submitted by the deadline. All applicants will be contacted once you are approved or declined.
- All accepted applicants will receive an Acceptance Letter.
- All accepted applicants will receive a Tsuut'ina Gūnáhà úwà Naahínánísha Post-Secondary Program Outline.
- All successful attendees that complete the Tsuut'ina Gūnáhà úwà Naahínánísha Post-Secondary Program will receive a Certificate.

I, hereby make application for to commit to the Tsuut'ina Home Language Program and accept the following conditions:

- Understand the Tsuut'ina Gūnáhà úwà Naahínánísha Post-Secondary Program Guidelines.
- Attach all documentation needed for my approval of sponsorship.
- Report any changes in, employment, and financial or personal status.

Signature

Date

Authorized By



Tsúūt'ínà Post-Secondary Program Oath of Commitment

Participant Information

Family Name: _____

Primary Contact Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Address: _____

Oath of Commitment

I, **[Name]**, acknowledge the importance of revitalizing and strengthening the Tsúūt'ínà language in my daily life. By signing this Oath of Commitment, we pledge to fully participate in the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program and uphold the following responsibilities:

- Daily Language Use** – I will actively incorporate the Tsúūt'ínà language into my daily life and commit to increasing its use within my everyday life.
- Language Tracking & Reporting** – I will maintain a daily journal/report to track hours of language use, activities completed, and progress made.
- Program Participation** – I will fully engage in all aspects of the program, including:
 - Attending class everyday and if I need to be excused from class due to illness/sickness I will ensure to inform my Instructor and Program Director in a timely manner.
 - Following the course outline (syllabus) for deadlines, grading structures, and material requirements.
 - Following the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program guidelines.
- Respect & Commitment** – We will honor this commitment by respecting the time and efforts of my Instructors, Mentors, Elders, and fellow students.
- Peer Support & Engagement** – Agree to engage in class/group discussions, assignments, class activities and peer support networks to share my language journey and encourage fellow participants.
- Final Assessment & Evaluation** – Agree to participate in the final evaluation to assess my language growth and share feedback on the program.

Declaration & Signatures

We understand that participation in the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program requires dedication and commitment. By signing this document, we affirm our responsibility to uphold our role in this program and contribute to the revitalization of our language for future generations.

Primary Applicant Name (Printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Other Family Members (if applicable):

Name (Printed): Signature: Date:

Program Representative Name (Printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____





Ádàguts'isdí-hí K'asónà

['Instructional Methods']

1. Classroom-based instruction
2. Knowledge Keeper, Elder, and Fluent Speaker-led learning
3. Land-based experiential education
4. Community engagement activities
5. Online learning platforms and digital resources
6. Mentorship and guided practice

Ádàguts'iyísdiní Nìsk'àdàts'inìstó-hí

['Assessment and Evaluation']

1. Oral language assessment with the Tsúūt'ínà Language and Culture/Traditions Committee
(Pre, mid, and final assessments)
 1. Self-assessment (Pre, mid, and final assessments)
 2. Participation and engagement
 3. Reflective journals
 4. Projects and presentations
 5. Teaching demonstrations
 6. Land-based evaluations



Daʔí Guts'idit'ití

['Delivery Method']

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program will be delivered through a hybrid model, combining in-person, land-based instruction on the Tsúūt'ínà Nation with complementary online learning. Core instruction will take place within Tsúūt'ínà territory and will be led and supported by the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Fluent Speakers, and Tsúūt'ínà Language Teachers. Online components will support accessibility and learner engagement while respecting community protocols. This approach ensures that language learning is grounded in land, culture, and community.



Guts'idit'ití K'àsì

['Implementation Plan']

The implementation of the program will occur in structured phases to ensure community alignment, responsible planning, and culturally grounded delivery. Each phase prioritizes collaboration with Tsúūt'ínà governance bodies, Fluent Speakers, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and program partners.

Guts'idit'ití K'àsì

['Implementation Plan']

Phase	Timeline	Key Activities
<p>Phase 1: Planning and Development</p>	<p>Months 1-4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present Proposal to Tsúüt'ínà Language and Culture Minor Chief Representatives, Tsúüt'ínà Language and Culture/Traditions Committee, Tsúüt'ínà Education Board, and Tsúüt'ínà Gūnáhà Násʔághà, secure budget/funding and/or external funding, establish partnerships, identify governance and reporting structures. • Seek guidance and feedback, and a formal approval. Create a workplan based on the Proposal and Implementation Plan with guidance and approval from partnerships. • Present proposal to the National Indigenous Accreditation Board to seek approval to be certified or accredited and create a partnership.

Guts'idit'ití K'àsì

['Implementation Plan']

<p style="text-align: center;">Phase 2: Recruitment/Capacity Building</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Months 5-7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive program approval by Stakeholders (Tsúüt'ínà Language and Culture Minor Chief Representatives, Tsúüt'ínà Language and Culture/Traditions Committee, Tsúüt'ínà Education Board, and Tsúüt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà) • Confirmed budget/funding, partnership agreements or letters of intent, and detailed operational workplan. • Recruitment of Program Director, Program Coordinator, and Course Instructors (4-8). • Tsúüt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà will administer budget/funding for Tuition/Fees/Admin Costs due to the <i>Tsúüt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program</i> being housed under Tsúüt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà. • Onboarding and Orientation of Program Director, Program Coordinator, and Course Instructors. Review the proposal, policies, workplan, and expectations. Create a 2-year Program workplan with Curriculum alignment, Course Outlines, Yearly Academic Calendar, and Team Meetings.
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Guts'idit'ití K'àsì ['Implementation Plan']

<p>Phase 3: Implement Program and Program Admission</p>	<p>Months 8-12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and finalize the Program Curriculum and Course Materials. Develop and review admission processes and application materials. • Promote the <i>Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program</i> with the Tsúūt'ínà Nation. • Host Information and Community Engagement sessions. • Student recruitment and intake, selection and acceptance of the first (1st) cohort. • Prepare instructional spaces and land-based logistics. • Confirm Fluent Speakers', Elders', and Knowledge Keepers' participation. • Confirm published admissions package, student cohort teaching resources prepared, and classroom/land-based scheduling.
<p>Phase 4: Begin Year</p>	<p>Year 1 Xázíní ['Fall']</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation for Students and Instructors, Fluent Speakers, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and Administration Staff. • Opening Pipe Ceremony • Begin Year 1 Course Delivery • Ongoing mentorship and Fluent Speaker, Knowledge Keepers, and Elder engagement. • Monitor Program operations and Student support. • Successful Program launch, active course delivery, and continue monitoring and reporting.

Guts'idit'ití K'àsì

['Implementation Plan']

<p>Phase 5: Ongoing</p>	<p>Year 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue monitoring, evaluation and adjustment. • Collect Students and Instructor feedback, conduct progress check-ins, review cultural and instructional alignment, address any needs necessary, and adjust delivery where appropriate. • Request and receive a mid-year evaluation report and review program adjustments and improvements.
<p>Phase 6: Ongoing</p>	<p>End of Year 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program continuation and Year 2 Preparation. • Evaluate Year 1 outcomes, revise curriculum and materials, confirm staffing for Year 2, and recruit next cohort (if applicable). • Request and review annual program review, updated implementation plan, and Year 2 readiness confirmation.

Didilí K'ats'inító-hí

['Budget Overview']

Cost Elements	Description	Budget
<p align="center">Student Support Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition, books, and living allowances (Present a budget to support Students so they wouldn't have to pay tuition and could receive living allowance – paid to go to school, similar to the 12-week Community Language Program) • Undergraduate Admission Application Fees • Graduation Application Fees 	<p>Living Allowance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2,750 per course x 4 courses for Year 1 = \$11,000 (Estimated based on Alberta Tuition costs) • \$2,750 per course x 4 courses for Year 2 = \$11,000 • \$11,000 x 25 Students = \$275,000 for Year 1 x 2 Years = \$550,000 • Undergraduate Admission Application Fee \$175 paid by per Student x 25 Students = \$4,375 • Graduate Application Fee \$50 paid by per Student x 25 Students = \$1,250

Didilí K'ats'inító-hí ['Budget Overview']

<p>Program Administration</p>	<p>Staffing, Student books/supplies, training, and daily operations (building maintenance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire Program Director/Supervisor/Lead, Program Coordinator and Instructor Salaries • Program Staff wages, plan/organize training/professional development for Staff, Student books/supplies, daily operational costs for Year 1 and Year 2 • Program Director Wage \$150,000 (TBD Based on Education Background/Experience), Program Coordinator \$110,000, Instructor Salaries (Utilize and reconstruct Tsúút'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà Pay Scale to support Post-Secondary Level Language Teachers) • Training/Professional Development \$75,000 per year • Students books/supplies \$250 per Student x 25 Students = \$6,250
<p>Cultural Programming/Land-based Activities</p>	<p>Elder honoraria, workshops, and events/activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$250 half day Elder honoraria • \$500 full day Elder honoraria • (TBD how many Elders per day, per course, per year based on Yearly Academic Calendar/Schedule) • (TBD workshops and events for Year 1 and Year 2 based on Yearly Academic Calendar/Schedule)

K'àgúnìt'á?í

['Conclusion']

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program affirms that Tsúūt'ínà gūnáhà is not only a language to be learned, but a living responsibility that carries Tsúūt'ínà identity, laws, relationships, and Nationhood. Rooted in Tsúūt'ínà naahínànísha ['our way of life'] and worldview, this program creates a Nation-governed, post-secondary pathway that supports the regeneration of language speakers and the continuity of cultural knowledge for **wusá** ['**future generations**'].

By bringing language and culture learning into an accredited academic setting while remaining grounded in land, community, and Elder guidance, this program strengthens the Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà Nás?ághà long-term vision. It responds to the urgent realities of language revitalization today, particularly the need to support second-language learners in becoming confident speakers, ethical knowledge holders, and capable language teachers who carry forward the teachings entrusted to them.

The Tsúūt'ínà Gūnáhà úwà Naahínànísha Post-Secondary Program is an investment in people, relationships, and in Nationhood. Through relational, land-based, and culturally grounded learning, it ensures that Tsúūt'ínà gūnáhà continues to live in our homes, classrooms, and lands. With the support and affirmation of the Tsúūt'ínà Nation, this program strengthens language continuity, honours our Elders, and prepares future generations to speak, teach, and live Tsúūt'ínà gūnáhà with respect, responsibility, accountability, and pride.

Mìts'idà?í

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