



U'mista News



January/February 1997

Our Commitment to the future
of the
Kwakwaka'wakw

Traditional
Food

Traditional
Land & Seas

'Na'mima

Potlatch
&
Spiritual Law

The Kwakwala Language
Is The Foundation Of The
KWAKWAKA'WAKW

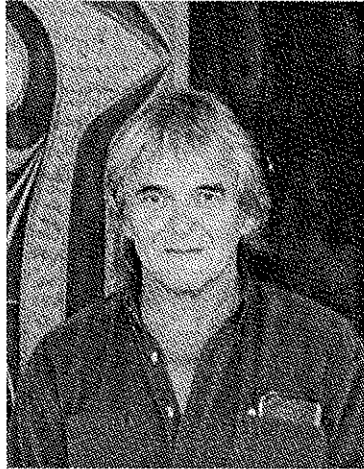
Since this issue of "U'mista News" is focusing on language, I will attempt to update you on the various initiatives that are being undertaken to retain the Kwakwala language.

Locally, the Kwakwala Steering Committee is still working to coordinate the efforts of all our Kwakwala Speaking First Nations in their language retention programs. The Kwakwala Steering Committee membership includes but is not limited to, two Kwakwala speaking members from each of our First Nations. It also includes a

number of other people committed to saving our language. Two of the short term goals of the committee are to train Kwakwala speaking teachers and Kwakwala curriculum development. As always, the limiting factor is finding enough money to carry out these goals.

Another goal of the Committee is to establish a Kwakwala Language Authority. Membership in the Kwakwala Language Authority would require both Kwakwala fluency and knowledge of our history and culture. The Language Authority would be responsible for establishing the requirements for Kwakwala Teacher certification and Kwakwala curriculum development. During the summer of 1996, the Kwakwala Steering Committee was instrumental in planning and hosting an Immersion Kwakwala Teacher training session held at a facility donated by the United Church of Canada on Gambier Island. This Immersion program is a good example of how Kwakwala Teachers can be trained. We all need to appreciate the dedication of the participants. An unfortunate misunderstanding did occur regarding this program. The people who attended the session had the expectation they would be certified as Kwakwala Teachers. As an interim member of the yet to be established Kwakwala

Chairman's Report



*William T. Cranmer
Chairman of the Board*

Language Authority, I was requested to sign documents recommending certification. I could not sign these documents since the requirements for certification have yet to be established by the Kwakwala Language Authority. I apologize to those people who were given the false expectation of certification and suggest that the Kwakwala Steering Committee and Kwakwala Language Authority establish proper certification and evaluation systems immediately. While the immersion session last year was a good start, it should be closer to

home. In the long term we need a four to five year language training program. One possible suggestion is to use St. Michael's Residential School Building as a Kwakwala University. This building was used by the Church and Governments to destroy our language and culture, therefore it would only be fitting to use it to revitalize them. At the same time, one of the two remaining historic buildings of this type in British Columbia would be saved. The Secwepemc Cultural Education Society in Kamloops is using their old Residential School as an administrative and cultural centre.

The T'hisalagi'lakw School and the U'mista Cultural Society are members of the First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres. This is a national organization that includes Cultural Education Centres from all the Provinces, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. While the main function of the FNCCEC is to lobby the government for the continuation and expansion of the Cultural Education Centers Program, they also facilitate the sharing of information and new developments between all their members. As well, the FNCCEC now administers Cultural Centres funding that was formerly administered by Indian

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and Northern Affairs Canada. This allows us to develop policies that better suit our needs rather than the governments. As the British Columbia representative on the National Board of Governors, Shirley Leon of the Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre in Sardis has been instrumental in expressing our concerns.

One major example of this is a recent initiative approved at the last Annual General Meeting of the FNCCEC to draft legislation to protect Aboriginal Languages. Verna Kirkness was contracted to produce this draft legislation, which we are going to review at a Language subcommittee meeting in March of 1997. Fortunately, a retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has offered his services to further develop the proposed legislation. While these efforts at the National level benefit us all, we must continue to fight for retention of our language at the local level.

Many of our First Nations who are in the Treaty Process are dealing with language and culture as substantive issues as part of the Treaties. As part of the necessity to address the issues of language and culture a joint Specific Claim by the Nuyumbalees Society and the U'mista Cultural Society is being researched. The review and analysis of the voluminous material uncovered by March 31, 1996, took the balance of 1996, resulting in a draft report containing some 96 pages and a legal opinion containing some 35 pages being prepared. We have applied for funding to complete the research on this Specific Claim. Within three months of funding being received, we will have finalized the Potlatch Specific Claim and submitted it to Specific Claims West in the hopes that it will be accepted for negotiation. If it is, then it is further hoped that sufficient compensation will be received in order to repatriate the remaining items seized from the "Potlatch Collection" and have all the returned artifacts properly and respectfully housed and protected. It has been very gratifying to see the support expressed by the member bands in the form of BCRs for this Specific Claim.

Your Centre is continuing on a project by project basis developing teaching aids for language instruction. The latest project that we are working on is an interactive computer program that will assist students and their parents to learn Kwakwala at home. Since this program would cost over \$150,000. to develop, we are searching high and low to find the money. We are also continuing with the "Talking" Kwakwala Dictionary. The Ethnobiological Literacy Manual will be available to the schools, bands and other Kwakwaka'wakw organizations before the end of the school year. This is just one example of continuing research that will provide us with the information required for language and historical curriculum development.

We all have to keep working to save our language, since it can only be accomplished by the community as a whole.

Yu'am



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Over 50 Years of Service to the Community

Yo wiksas! This issue of the newsletter is based on the Kwakwala language. Researching and assembling this issue of the newsletter has made me aware of the seriousness of how close our language is to extinction.

When you review the actual numbers of the fluent speakers to the population of Kwakwaka'wakw. The numbers are frightening.

It is easy to blame the conditions that we all as native people have experienced in the past. But, the time has come to take action we all need to become involved in saving our language. We need to do more than send our children to the tribal schools, hoping, and wishing that they will be the ones to save our language. It is just as much our responsibility as the tribal schools and school district to teach our children and show them the way of our people, the culture and language. We the adults set the examples for our children. It seems pretty pointless when a child can speak Kwakwala to his parents, aunt, uncle, brother, and sister and they answer in English.

There is a small force of people who teach their native language and those who are concerned in the direction of the language, who work hard to preserve what they treasure, the Kwakwala language.

Cultural Update




Yvonne Wilson
**Cultural Coordinator/
Newsletter Editor**

The expectation of saving the Kwakwala language is not unrealistic. It can be saved with the involvement of the family, and the community. We need to take action before we loose our resources - our elders and speakers.

One day soon after realizing that the serious danger that the language faces, my daughter a student at the 'Namgis Tribal School, T'hisala'gila'kw School, left me a note one morning before she went to school. It was written in Kwakwala. I was amazed by a number of things, one, my girl wrote me a note in Kwakwala - I felt a lot of pride as I read this note. Two, I was amazed

I was able to sound out some of the words. Three, I understood she was asking me a question about the U'mista. I had to wait until I got home from work to ask my mother to translate the note. It read,

I have taken positive action to reinforce what is being taught at my children's school by asking my mother and grand mother to help me by talking Kwakwala to me when I am around them. I have a vague knowledge of our language and would like to learn more like phrases and commands to be able to answer my children and to talk to my children in their and my language. I know I can be a future speaker if I continue to do the hard work I have been doing.



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1997 is starting of to be a challenging and exciting year. As I mentioned in the last issue of "U'mista News" our archival project has been completed. Rita Wong has returned to Vancouver and Lorraine is well into her 3 month internship at the Royal British Columbia Museum as part of the Aboriginal Cultural Stewardship Program, and we are looking forward to hosting Lorraine and her fellow classmates for a 6 day course on Collections Management. his course is being taught by Gloria Cranmer-Webster with assistance from myself.

The final draft of the Ethnobiological manual "*The Living World: Plants and Animals Used by the Kwakwaka'wakw*" has been completed and we are currently researching the best method for producing the manual. This year we plan to continue ongoing cataloguing of library books, video and audio tapes

Collections Update



Juanita Pasco
Collections Manager

generated from specific projects. The largest undertaking will be to complete the balance of the cataloguing

for the photographic collection (four archive boxes). "The Living World" photographic exhibit is still on display in Gallery III but plans underway to dismantle the exhibit so you might want to come in and have a look at it soon.

We are always looking for volunteers so if anyone would like to spend the afternoon looking at photographs and identifying individuals in the photographs please contact me here at the Centre, (974-5403). The photographs range from c. 1950 to 1989 (these dates are only approximate), some of which are a little before my time. Even if you are unable to identify individuals in the photographs we can always use help cataloguing the photographs.

Gilakas'la.

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Community Member Express Concerns:

Are We Losing the Kwakwala Language?

By: Gloria Cranmer Webster

After being away for thirty years, I recently returned home in 1975 and was surprised to find that people who had never left Alert Bay were unable to speak Kwakwala. The reason they gave for this sad state of affairs was that they were forbidden to speak in Kwakwala school. That prohibition also applied to earlier generations who attended residential school or, in my case, the Alert Bay Indian Day School. Yet somehow, we remained fluent, so what was given as a reason for lack of fluency sounded more like an excuse to me. However people tried to justify their inability to Kwakwala, it was quite clear that something needed to be done in the way of saving the language.

Before coming home, I was an assistant curator at the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia. There I became friends with Jay Powell, a linguist/anthropologist who taught in the Department of Anthropology. He had worked with at Musquem, La Push and Gitksan communities to produce teaching materials in various languages.

Together, we developed an orthography for Kwakwala. Without Jay's expertise, I wouldn't have known where to start and I am grateful for his contribution to the beginnings of our language program. He and I made a deliberate decision not to use the International Phonetic Alphabet, knowing that very few people would have access to typewriters with IPA symbols. The other consideration was that this is our language and we don't have to use anyone else's system. So the orthography we invented uses only the letters found on standard typewriters, with the addition of apostrophes and underlining to identify the various sounds of Kwakwala. It works, but you do have to put some effort into it. Jay and I produced a series of lesson that I used for teaching adults, with the help of my late mother. She was extremely helpful in making sure we didn't make mistakes. For example, we wanted to say, "What is your name?" She pointed out that the correct question was, "Who are you?", in case the person you were asking didn't have a proper (i.e., Kwakwala) name.

Sometime after our school was established in 1976, Lorraine Hunt and I began to teach Kwakwala. Neither of

us were trained teachers, nor did we have any materials. We got by on our enthusiasm and that of our students. We quickly learned how to be creative in doing things like teaching basic arithmetic in Kwakwala, using whatever was in the classroom.

In 1979, Jay Powell and his wife, Vickie Jensen, spent a year with us, after I had found enough money to develop a series of language books. Vickie photographs and Nola Johnson's illustrations gave a professional touch to the 12 books we produced, each with accompanying audio tapes. A teacher's manual completed the project. Until I left the Cultural Centre in 1990, we were still getting orders for our books from various native communities across the country. Some good things happened at the Cultural Centre while I was there, but one of the accomplishments in which I take the most pride is our "Learning Kwakwala" series. My late grandmother, Ada Cook, and my late mother made sure that we did things properly and I am still grateful for the support they gave us.

About a year after our books were finished, we realized that we didn't have any one who knew how to work with the material. Once again, I began to write funding proposals, this time, for the Kwakwala Teaching Training Project, which was to help people learn how to use our books. Jay Powell, Vickie Jensen and Joy Wild were the instructors for an enthusiastic group of students. When you think about the recommendations relating to the language program at our school, maybe it's time to offer KTTP again, in order to upgrade what us presently offered.

Sometime in the 1980's, we began to hold weekly singing classes for those who were interested in learning traditional songs, using our orthography to transcribe the words to the songs. Transcription was one of the many things not in my job description, but somehow, that task was fitted in, as well as translations for whoever needed that done. Both men and women attended our singing classes, including those who would have told us that it was wrong for women to sing, if that was the case. This leads me to wonder about the current singing classes which are advertised "for men" only.

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In retrospect, I would say that some positive beginnings were made at the U'mista Cultural Centre during my tenure as Director/Curator, but we seem to have lost sight of what were clearly established priorities, such as demanding accuracy in the use and spelling of Kwak'wala words.

Recently, I was in the Centre and saw a sweatshirt, on which the artist was identified as being of the "Kwagulh Nations. Under the design was the word "bukwis". Both "Kwagulh" and "bukwis" are incorrectly spelled and, for that reason, the shirt would not have been sold in the Gift Shop while I was there. Maybe it's time for the board of Directors to evaluate what's happening at the Centre and find out why the standards we worked hard to establish have been lost.

A few days ago, I had a visit from a relative newcomer to Alert Bay and we discussed the state of Kwak'wala. He is learning the language on his own and if it is possible for a white person to do that, why can't our own people make that kind of effort? Our politicians can talk all they

want about land claims and self-government, but none of it means anything if we allow our language to die. If Kwak'wala disappears, what happens to our identity as Kwak'waka'wakw people? Imagine potlatches happening in English. That is a possibility if we don't make concerted efforts now to save our language. It's not good enough for our leaders to talk about importance of teaching children Kwak'wala. They must set an example by learning the language themselves. Parents must also do their part, by supporting and encouraging their children. The most positive way to do this is for parents to learn Kwak'wala at the same time their children are. With the resources of the U'mista Cultural Centre and T'isalagi'lakw School as well as real commitment from our people, we have a good chance to save Kwak'wala.

I expect that some people reading this article will disagree with me. That's okay. The editor did say that I could write whatever I wanted, as long as it was true. It is.

Editors Note:

*In response to the statement Ms. Cranmer-Webster expressed in her article **Are we losing the Kwak'wala Language?***

One of the concerns she expressed was the "For Men Only" singing classes. I would like to clarify this misunderstanding for Ms. Cranmer-Webster and any other members of the community who share her feelings.

Part of my responsibilities as Cultural Coordinator at U'mista is to provide activities requested by the community. The particular activity in question was requested by the Alert Bay Men's Support Group. This particular group was interested in learning our traditional songs. In a couple of meetings, members of the group expressed that they did not feel comfortable learning outside of the Men's Group; therefore, the solution was to offer the class as a men's only activity. I had planned in the future to offer the popular Singing and Dance classes to the community.

As of March we are still continuing to offer the

community the Singing and Dance classes. There have been some changes to the program. We have a new instructor, Tyler Cranmer, and the classes are now being held at the Big House instead of the U'mista Cultural Centre. The classes are on Monday and Wednesday evenings from 7 pm to 9 pm, until June 1997.

I feel that I must thank Ms. Cranmer-Webster for bringing this to my attention and apologize for any misunderstanding.

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History of Kwakwala Decline

Written By: Stan Ananby

Kwakwala has been experiencing a decline since contact with Europeans in the mid-1700's. For the first century and a half, the decline was numerical. From pre-contact population of 19,125 (Boyd, 1990), the population fell to just 1,039 in 1924. That is, the number of speakers declined by 95% because 95% of the speakers died because of introduced diseases and warfare.

The numerical decline of the Kwakwaka'wakw was halted around 1930, but the decline of the language continued. Welcoming Boas to Fort Rupert in 1930. George Hunt lamented that two thirds of the Kwakwala language had been lost. After 1930, the Kwakwaka'wakw society began to shift to English, and by the 1940's, most children were no longer learning Kwakwala in their homes.

The current numbers of Kwakwala speakers are low, and dropping fast. In 1977, SIL found 1,000 Kwakwala speakers. By 1981, the census counted 975 Wakashan speakers, which includes Kwakwala (Grimes, 1988:12). In 1991, Statistics Canada counted 485 Wakashan speakers, includes Kwakwala (Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 1991:226). In 1992, Dawson did a comprehensive survey of all Kwakwala speakers (excluding the Campbell River and Comox area). She counted only 228 speakers (Planning Report, 1992). There are likely around 200 Kwakwala speakers today, which account for less than 4% of the Kwakwaka'wakw population.

Recently, there had been a revived pride and interest in Kwakwala. Various Kwakwala language programs developed in schools throughout Vancouver Island. Despite the renewed interest, the decline of Kwakwala continued. The Kwakwala programs in the schools have not succeeded in getting the children to speak Kwakwala fluently with each other.

How To Reverse Kwakwala Decline. What is happening in Alert Bay is what scholars call "language shift". That means, the community is shifting from Kwakwala to English. Efforts to revive Kwakwala are termed "reversing language shift". To reverse Kwakwala decline, it is impor-

tant to know precisely what position Kwakwala is in. Without clear knowledge of the present, one cannot plan effectively for the future. Joshua Fishman gives a model of eight different stages of language shift, with number eight being the most severe, and number one being least. The stages are as follows:

8. No speakers.
7. Most speakers are beyond childbearing age.
6. Establishing the vital linkage with youth, family, neighborhood and community (this stage is crucial).
5. Voluntary schools to teach how to read and write Kwakwala.
4. Kwakwala in the elementary schools.
3. Kwakwala in the workplace.
2. Kwakwala in Local governmental services and media.
1. Kwakwala at all levels - used as English is today. (1991a:89-395).

Kwakwala is at stage seven. That is, it is only used by members of the older generation to communicate with each other. It is important that language revival efforts keep this in mind. The key to reversing language shift from Kwakwala to English is inter-generational transmission. That is, the goal of reversing language shift is for Kwakwala to be spoken between the generations once again - between grandparents and grandchildren, between parents and children. Fishman (1991a:368-380) points out that schools alone do not hold the key, rather homes and neighborhoods do. The most common course of action language revival projects take is to go immediately to higher stages, such as stage four, before addressing the needs of the lower stages. Stages four and five involve the development of curriculum in Kwakwala, and concentrate teaching literacy and other subjects in a school setting. However, it has been found that embarking on activities at this level before the foundations of the lower levels are laid, does not result in success. In fact the efforts to maintain or revive a language

can be nullified by racing too far ahead to levels not yet attainable" (Fishman 1991a:111-114). In North America there are many examples of language projects which have concentrated on developing curriculum prematurely. There are many languages with fine curriculum - Navajo, Blackfoot, Cree, Carrier, Tlingit whose communities are continuing to shift to English.

The Kwakwaka'wakw shift from Kwakwala to English did not occur in a vacuum. It occurred in an atmosphere where the whole traditional culture was being eroded. Likewise, reversing language shift will not succeed if the focus is solely on Kwakwala. Language shift "must be part of a greater effort at economic political, social, and particularly economic and educational mobilization" (Marshall, 1994:23). Just as Kwakwala was lost in an atmosphere where the whole Kwakwaka'wakw culture was being eroded; it can only be revived in an atmosphere where the culture is being rebuilt. I will outline below some suggestions:

Preschool Program. Children learn languages more easily than adults, because they are not as shy about making mistakes. Thus, it is logical to begin teaching children Kwakwala as young as possible. Since the speakers of Kwakwala are past child-bearing age, today there is no possibility of raising children with Kwakwala as their first language. However, even this problem can be overcome, as it was in New Zealand, by "language nests". Children will not become speakers of Kwakwala unless they hear that language spoken around them, unless they engage in activity in that language, for some considerable time each day. In previous generations, children heard Kwakwala spoken around them continually in their own homes. As this is not the case today, we must recreate a Kwakwala environment for them.

School Program. With the success of the Kwakwala language pre-schools, there will be an incentive for the primary and later, secondary schools to work on an immersion program to enable the children to continue learning in Kwakwala. Parental support is crucial. Bilingual children and their enthusiastic parents are essential in establishing a program.

The lack of people with teaching certificates who speak Kwakwala poses a problem. The Maoris solved this problem by setting up teaching teams, where the teacher was helped by a fluent Maori-speaking Kalahari reo (language assistant). (Spolsky, 1990:125) This language assistant would not only

help the pupils, she would also help the teachers become more fluent in Kwakwala.

The lack of Kwakwala teaching material also poses a problem. One solution would be to apply for funding for a Kwakwala teaching material project. This project would employ a group of people with expertise in teaching and another group with the expertise in Kwakwala, who would produce Kwakwala teaching materials such as tests for the lower grades.

There is another way to produce Kwakwala material. The best way to guarantee continuity of the Kwakwala school program is have teachers continually work on producing new teaching material in Kwakwala. The students, especially in the higher grades, can also be instrumental in producing material. The Navajo students both at primary and secondary level write for a newspaper and write booklets that become reading material for the classes that follow. (Reyhner, 1989:108) Students can be encouraged to write in Kwakwala in community newspapers like the Musgamagw Tswataineuk Tribal Council Newsletter, which can be used by other students.

Adult Program. Since Kwakwala is at stage seven, where communication is only taking place between elders, it is crucial that the adults learn Kwakwala. They are the link between the elders and the children. If the children become fluent in Kwakwala, then are not able to communicate with their parents, the vital inter-generations link will be broken.

There should be regular Kwakwala immersion programs for adults - either in some remote area or here in Alert Bay, where we could use the old Tł'isalagi'lakw School buildings for classrooms. There should also be some economic inducement for language learning and use.

Conclusion. Kwakwala legends are full of references to treasures, called "dlugwala". Bourdieu (1982:24-25) compares language to a treasure and people to store houses, each holding different amounts of the treasure. For several decades, the Kwagiulth people have been in the process of losing the treasure. For several decades, the Kwagiulth people have been in the process of losing the treasure of the Kwakwala language. This outlines a method to refill the stores with treasures; to refill the people with Kwakwala. If its suggestions are implemented, Kwakwala can and once again will become a language of everyday life in the North Vancouver Island area.

Interview with a Language Teacher

By: Yvonne Wilson

Christine Joseph/Twance, commonly known as Whata, works with School District #85 as their Language Teacher. She works with approximately 100 students per day. She teaches the Kwakwala Language classes and other subjects to do with the Kwakwaka'wakw, such as Native Art Work, Button Blanket and Traditional Doll Making and Traditional Native plants of the Kwakwaka'wakw and their traditional medicines. As well as working with the youth she has also been involved with teaching adults the Kwakwala language. She has expressed that there are difficulties in teaching the language due to the fact that it is not used as often as it was in the past.

The problems we face today with the lose of our culture and language was due to the old ways, referring to when they were punished severely for speaking their language and practicing their dances and culture. It was quite clear that there was shame connected to the language and the culture. She herself was effected by this practice as recalls an incident when she was a little girl and was punished for speaking her language. But unlike many of that generation that those chose to forget their language and culture, She chose to leave her insecurities behind with those times and pursue a long-life dream and teach the youth and all those interested in our culture and language.

A majority of her students are non-native, Christine approximates 80-90 % are non-native that she teaches. She works with these students for approximately 20-30

minutes over 7 classes per day, 5 days a week. She found it difficult to know if the students were learning the language in this short period of time. She feels that a lot of what she teaches her students is forgotten due to the fact that the language is spoken out of those classes and also not enforced at home.

While it is important that the Kwakwala language and the Kwakwaka'wakw culture and history is taught to the students of the North Island, she soon found out that there was no Kwakwaka'wakw curriculum or resources available in the School District. Like so many in her position, she did not have the proper training to develop the necessary material and got by on her own enthusiasm and that of her students.

The future does not look good for the Kwakwala language, the lack of involvement and awareness amongst our communities in the important need of the language retention. Whata has expressed that we are in desperate need of help from our current Kwakwala speakers. We need their assistance outside the school system by talking in our language to the youth with simple commands and phrases to enforce what is being taught at school. She has also recommended that we need to have our elders involvement as they are the backbone of the Native community. We must realize that we were given the gift to Kwakwala by our ancestors and that it is nothing to be ashamed of, but to be proud and honored to be able to speak our native tongue.

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Kwakwala Language Training Proposal

By: Linda Manz

The article "Stilled Voices" by Tara Grescoe reproduced in this issue of the newsletter reinforces the importance of the discussion on the loss of native languages and the impact this has on the culture. All over Canada, the existing fifty-three different language groups have been searching for methods to retain their languages. For twenty-five years, the U'mista has participated in this search.

Over the years, U'mista has created language programs and materials that have been used in the public and tribal schools. Although a lot of good work has been done, the number of fluent kwakwala speakers continues to decline. As observed elsewhere in this newsletter, less than 9% of the

Kwakwaka'wakw speak their language.

Right now U'mista is working on what could be an exciting new method for learning the language. Our most recent proposal is for a training method that uses the latest technology - a computer language program. Widely dispersed educational resources will be brought together under a single technological way of learning.

It will be designed so that it can be used in the home where children and parents can get together with the computer. This will be a practical approach that will allow people who are not in classrooms or who do not have time for immersion to practice on their own, at home. It will, of course, also be available to the schools.

A lot of people have been involved in planning this, and the U'mista intends to lead the way in developing this project, experimenting with it, and assessing how it will work. Once the project is in place and has proven itself the U'mista will share its method with other language groups and other interested people across the country.

At this point the project is still a "proposal." Funding is not yet in place. We expect it to cost about \$160,000. If anyone wishes to know about this proposal, feel free to contact me at the U'mista. We will continue to vigorously pursue funding for this project because we are committed to the fact that language is essential to the survival of the culture.

School District #85 in Support of the Language Computer Program

To: Office of Learning Technologies;

This is a letter of support for the U'mista Cultural Society's proposal to develop a technology based strategy for the learning of Kwakwala.

Part of my role as District Principal, First Nations Programs, is to encourage cultural workers in School District #85 to speak Kwakwala to the students as much as possible. A few schools have scheduled classes in Kwakwala, other schools include a limited amount of Kwakwala in the scheduled First Nations Culture classes. The goal of the school program is to develop awareness

of the language, a knowledge of the alphabet, basic greetings and phrases, and confidence in using every day sentences and expressions. We have no chance of developing fluent speakers without community support. Many parents would like to support and reinforce the children's learning but are unable to do so since they are not speakers. The initiative the U'mista Cultural Society is proposing will insert the "missing link" in the drive to revive Kwakwala as the language of choice in the communities of the Kwakwaka'wakw.

The plan for a computer program which will enable

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adults to learn Kwakwala on personal computers in their own homes and at their own speed is excellent. A number of initiatives to teach adults have been attempted over the years. Unfortunately, these have had very limited success. It is my belief that trying to teach Kwakwala through pen and paper tasks, teacher lecture, and with the expectation of practicing sounds and speaking words individually but in the presence of others is asking for failure. These were developed by western society for schools in which many First Nations people have not had success, have not felt comfortable, and have not seen themselves reflected.

I believe that parents and other community members will feel much more relaxed in learning Kwakwala when they can sit in their homes, learn with family members, bring their own pace to lessons, and listen and respond orally. We know that when tension and pressure are

relaxed learning is enjoyable, with success the outcome.

I applaud the initiative of the U'mista Cultural Society and give it my wholehearted support. I look forward to working with the program myself! We know the following statement is true.

It takes the whole community to teach a child his language.

Sincerely,



Flora Cook, District Principal
First Nations Programs

STUDENT MUSEUM WORKERS

U'MISTA CULTURAL SOCIETY

Resumes must be submitted by June 15, 1997

JOB DESCRIPTION:

An eight week position as a museum worker during July and August of 1997. Position will include some training.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Able to work independently and as part of a team. Hard working. Must have been a student during the 1996/97 school year and planning to return to school in September of 1997.

JOB TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) Conducting tours for both school groups and adults, which includes the necessity of learning the culture and history of the Kwakwaka'wakw as well as public speaking.
- 2) Doing basic office work including: reception, photocopying, typing, filing, answering the telephone, data entry and word processing.
- 3) Retail sales including using the cash register and handling cash.
- 4) Any other duties which may be assigned.

U'mista Cultural Society

P.O. Box 253

Alert Bay, BC

V0N 1A0

Tel: (250) 974-5403 ☎ Fax: (250) 974-5499 ☎ e-mail: umista@island.net

Stilled Voices

*Article Written By: Taras Grescoe
Reprinted from the Georgia Strait*

Twelve pairs of brown eyes watch us walk into the classroom. Joe Aleck motions me to sit down on the floor, among the boys and girls of Seabird Island Community School's Grade 4 class, and they stare with frank, unblinking curiosity at the tall newcomer in their midst. "I want you to say hello to our guest," says Aleck, one of two first Nations language instructors at this Native-run school on an island in the Fraser River, 110 kilometres upstream from Vancouver. "Law, na's! They cry in unison, pronouncing my name the Halq'emeylem way swapping the "r" for an "l". I manage to reply "Law, class"- and that's the first word of this complex, elegant, doomed language. I'll pronounce correctly this morning. Aleck immediately launches into a prayer that defies repetition by anyone raised in European tongue, and the children confidently echo him. "O chichelh siyam, plist te sq'epet... Ey kws kakw'eleset te s'l:wes te yo:lexwalk."

Though I try to follow these eight and nine year-olds as they bless our gathering, I'm reduced to a sheepish mumble before we reach the final line, "Ey kws ste'as" (So be it"). Halq'emeylem, the ancestral Salishan language of these Sto:lo Nation people - Sto:lo means "large river"-contains 18 sounds that never occur in English. The speech is studded not only with popping glottal stops but also with hissing lateral fricatives — in which the air seeps over the sides of the tongue — and Xs that are blown over the roof of the mouth. Aleck's entreaty to the Great Spirit includes tongue-twisting sounds heard only in Welsh, German and Cockney, along with the tonal variations of Cantonese; in its written form, it looks like the kind of alphabet soup touch typist produced when their fingers have slipped a notch to the right on the keyboard. But Halq'emeylem's complexities don't end there.

"There are 21 different ways of counting in our

language," Aleck tells the class. "Today, we're going to count people." Aside from regular set of numbers, there's a separate set of words for enumerating among other things, fish, fruit in cluster, canoe, people, and coins. Each set of numbers has important structural differences and has to be learned separately. As the children start the head count — "lo`lets'e, ye`yesle, lhxwale..." — I stare out the window toward Mount Cheam, one of the Coast Mountain Peaks that surge abruptly, like immense freighters, out of the flat valley floor, Cheam's name comes from the Halq'emeylem word scl:yam, which means "place of wild strawberries", and you can still find clusters of tiny, perfect berries on the nearby riverbank. Downstream, the burgeoning suburb of Coquitlam owes its name to Kw'ikw'ed'em, which means "stinking fish slime" — salmon were once butchered there by the now vanished Kwantlen people.

Just about every rock, sandbar, and turn in the Fraser River has been named by the Sto:lo people. There's a separate Halq'emeylem word for not only each of the five kind of Pacific Salmon (including coho, a Sto:lo term that, like Sasquatch, has entered common English usage) but also for salmon that come from specific creeks at certain times of the year. These words, taken together, are a revelation got me; a hint of the possibility of a deeper historical understanding of the features of Fraser River Valley, a landscape I've grown up taking for granted. Unfortunately, if things don't change soon, the dozen children in this classroom might be among the last to utter them.

As the kids leave for recess, I talk to nine-year old Derek Ross Joe, who speaks Halq'emeylem most frequently outside of school — or at least used to, "My grandfather died on January 23," says Derek, a spiky-haired boy who watches me with an equal mixture of

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wariness and curiosity, “so I don’t have anyone to talk Halq’emeylem to anymore.” In 1988, there were 58 elders who spoke the language fluently; as of June this year, fewer than 20 remained in the Fraser Valley — three of them died in the first four months of 1996. These days, among the people of the Sto:lo Nation, it’s hard to find fluent speakers of Halq’emeylem under the age of 65. Because Derek’s parents don’t speak the language at home, his only exposure to Halq’emeylem will be the 30 minute lessons in the school, which stops after Grade 9. And, as anyone who went through 10 years of public-school French can testify, a half-hour of instruction a day leads to a mastery of songs like “Frere Jacques”, the ability to repeat the days of the week, a few dozen halting phrases, and not much more. In spite of the optimism of Instructors like Joe Aleck, and the efforts of the Sto:lo Nation as a whole, Halq’emeylem as a living language — as the most direct and profound way of passing on the cultural knowledge of an entire society — might disappear within a generation, doomed to die with the older members of the Sto:lo Nation.

At first glance, what’s happening on Seabird Island looks like an isolated tragedy. It’s hard to see why the loss of a language never spoken by more than 5,000 people, with no written literature — without even a fixed alphabet until recently — should be concern to anyone but a handful of Natives scattered along the Fraser River. But in Canada, what’s happening to Halq’emeylem is the rule, not the exception. Across the country, dozens of First Nations languages are about to be silenced forever.

Last December saw the death of the last Canadian fluent speaker of Tuscarora, and Iroquian language that’s spoken in southern Ontario. Abenaki, an Algonquian language, now has fewer than 10 speakers in southern Quebec, and Tagish, an Athapascan language of the southern Yukon and northern B.C., has perhaps half a dozen. Of the 53 Native languages still spoken in Canada, 43 are on the verge of extinction. Even those with most speakers — Cree and Ojibwa, spoken by 90,000 people from the Rocky Mountains to Ontario, and Inuktitut, which is still the first languages

of 16,000 people in the Arctic — aren’t guaranteed safe passage into the 21st century.

“A language can go very fast,” says M. Dale Kinkade, a linguist at the University of British Columbia who specializes in the Native languages of the Northwest. “As people stop using the a language, only the older people know it, and then the elders start dying off. We thought that languages like Kwak’wala in British Columbia and Navajo in the United States were fairly strong, but actually they’re not. The children aren’t learning them”

It’s as process that’s being repeated in villages and communities throughout the world. Michael Krauss, a linguist at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, estimates that of the 6,000 languages currently spoken in the world, only 600 are likely to survive the next century. “Within the next 50 years, which is just a breath away, we’ll see the extinction of 80 or 90 percent of North America’s languages,” he says from his office at the Native Language Center. He further estimates that 90 percent of the world’s languages might not survive until the end of the next century.

The extinction curve is going to shoot up, and at the same time, we’ll see the growth of a relative few safe languages: Russian, Chinese, Spanish, Hindi, English.” Krauss dismisses the popular idea that the emergence of a few world languages will foster comprehension and, therefore, peace, and he points out that the most brutal civil wars in the world involve people who speak the same language. He put the argument most forcefully in an influential 1992 article in the U.S. Journal *Languages*: “Just as the extinction of any animal species diminishes our world, so does the extinction of any language. Surely we linguists know, and the general public can sense that any language is a supreme achievement of a uniquely human collective genius, as divine and endless a mystery as a living organism.”

In Canada, nowhere will be harder hit than British Columbia. It is the province with the greatest linguist diversity. (In fact, the only place in North America

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with more languages in California.) The province's 30 languages belong to eight completely different language families, which in turn, are divided into hundreds of different dialect groups. Halq'emeylem alone has 18 dialects, divided into three major groups: Upriver, Downriver, and Island, each with its own distinctions. I mention to Kinkade that I've heard that a person encounters as many languages traveling up coast of British Columbia as one does going from Paris to Moscow. "It's more like going from Paris to Peking," he replies. "Most European languages, like English and French, are in the same family; they're not mutually intelligible, but they're still related. Halq'emeylem and Carrier [a central B.C. tongue that belongs to a different language family] are as different from each other as French is from Chinese. As a matter of course, Natives in B.C. used learn and speak several languages."

From a scientific point of view, the diversity of British Columbia's endangered languages provides an incredibly rich database for linguists. For example, interviews with speakers of the Shuswap language have proved that they use only one word for both pure yellow and pure green, fueling a scientific debate over whether or not color terms — the way humans divide up the spectrum — are universal or cultural. The presence of 46 different consonants — more than twice as many in English — In Tahitan, a language spoken near the Alaskan border, goes a long way to proving that Native languages are no less complex than European languages. Kinkade has argued that certain Salishan languages appear to make no clear distinction between nouns and verbs, a strong challenge to one of linguistics' dominant paradigms: that all languages, no matter how different, share certain universal features.

Hotly disputed by linguists, these topics might one day offer fundamental insights into the common intellectual heritage of the human race. If North America's Native tongues had never been documented, however, the debated over the extent of human linguistic diversity that today divides the study of language wouldn't even be possible. Linguist such as Kinkade and Krauss have devoted their careers to

working with the last speakers of Native dialects, compiling dictionaries and grammars of orally transmitted languages that would otherwise die unrecorded. Teachers tells me that when she asks children to imagine Transformers — mischievous beings who, in Salishan legend, transform people into rocks and salamanders — the first thing many of them draw are the Japanese robots from the television cartoons of the same name.

Brent Galloway, a linguist who now works at the Saskatchewan Federated Indian College in Regina, spent 20 years working with Sto:lo elders to document the Halq'emeylem language, producing a 20,000 - word dictionary (which will also be released on a computer disk), and ethnobotany of the Sto:lo people, and a 660 - page grammar of Upriver Halq'emeylem. But he knows his efforts will not be enough to preserve the language when the last fluent speaker dies.

"We're going to lose words that encapsulate the whole knowledge of the culture," says Galloway. "Halq'emeylem has a rich literature, which was transmitted orally, and a lot of that is already gone. The language itself incorporates a whole way of looking at the universe, which is different from worldview conveyed by English and French. " when the last Native speaker dies, no one will be left to explain why the Halq'emeylem word for wild ginger, a plant found on the bank of the Fraser, is ih'eld:ltel, which means "a device for the heart".

"Now I don't know if doctors have investigated wild ginger as heart medicine," says Galloway, who collected local plants and tries, with little success, to encourage elders to divulge family recipes for traditional cures. "It might be a good lead. This one word alone has the key to the plant right in it. The language as a whole may help us with problems that we haven't been able to solve — whether they're how to respect the land. There's a whole worldview about sustainable development that you can see in the language, and God knows we could use some alternative viewpoints on our relationship with the land right now.

The tiny cultural centre on Seabird Island, set among

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curving rows of bungalows, looks more like a one-room log cabin than one of the last battlegrounds in the fight to save the language of the Sto:lo people. The boisterous children have left the adjoining community school for the day, and most of them will go back home to while away this rainy afternoon in front of English-language television — an institution that linguists such as Krauss liken to “cultural nerve gas”. Joe Aleck and Shirley Norris, both Halq’emeylem teachers in their early 60’s are preparing the next day’s lessons. They consider themselves only moderately fluent in Upriver Halq’emeylem, the dialect they’re teaching. Neither learned the language completely as a child.

Like many Natives of his generation, Aleck lived in a residential school for most of his childhood years, and he was punished whenever he was caught speaking his parents’ language. “We’d get a lot of strappings,” recalls Aleck. At the Coqualeetza Residential School, an institution in Sardis that many Sto:lo Natives attended, already hungry children were denied meals, forced to remain with their arm outstretched in a “push-up” position until they collapsed, and encouraged to inform on other students.

“From the time of the missionaries,” says Aleck, “the students were punished for speaking their language. In a lot of the old people’s minds, speaking Halq’emeylem is still a bad thing. It’s the Devil’s work.” Linguists and historians throughout North America now identify residential and mission schools, with their strictly enforced language policies, as the greatest single force in wiping out the continent’s Native languages.

There’s an outside chance that, in spite of the influence of the unilingual schools, Halq’emeylem might yet survive. Linguist point out that in the some cases, entire languages have been brought back from the dead. Thanks to the refusal of a single couple to speak anything but a dead tongue in the presence of their son, a language heard only in synagogues for thousands of years — Hebrew — is now spoken on the streets of Tel Aviv and in schoolrooms throughout

Israel. Cornish, whose last fluent speaker died in 1777, is today being learned by school children in England. There’s enough documentation of Halq’emeylem — thanks largely to linguists such as Galloway — for current generations to envision a similar revival, even after the last fluent speaker has died. Members of the Sto:lo Nation are working with elders, and some younger speakers (“younger,” in this context, meaning less than 65 years old) are becoming moderately fluent. Vancouver’s Co-op Radio is broadcasting an hour long show in Halq’emeylem once a month, and an immersion program to train adults to teach the language is starting this year. Derek Ross Joe might yet have some one with whom to speak the language of his grandfather.

Shirley Norris sees an immersion program for children — like the Mohawk classes on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario — as the language’s only hope. The real gauge of a language’s health is the number of children who are learning it, and the 30 minutes a day that kids are getting now simply aren’t enough to ensure survival. “At one time, we had four elders here who would sit in on the classes twice a week,” says Norris. “But one passed away not long ago, and the others were laid off because of a lack of funding.” In California, where the language extinction crisis is even more acute, a mentor system pairs an elder with a single child for weeks at a time, and they carry out all their daily activities in the threaten language. “Our elders say, ‘I will give everything I have, I will tell everything I know, to anyone who will listen.’ But on Seabird Island,” points out Norris, “there’s not even any money to pay for the elders’ transportation to the school, and some haven’t the money to pay for it themselves.”

Today, the only dialect connection that the children on Seabird Island have with their past — through the words that mediated their culture’s 9000 years of life on the Fraser River — is an elder, in her 80s named Elizabeth Herrling. Herrling, who learned to speak Halq’emeylem fluently as a first language, sat in on classes with the children until the funding was cut earlier this year. Now she spends her afternoon

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in the cultural centre, reading a newspaper through thick glasses. Every few minutes, Joe Aleck checks a sentence with her, making sure he's got it right for tomorrow's lesson. "Elizabeth, how would you say 'He's barbecuing salmon?'" She looks up from her paper, thinks for a minute, and replies with glottal stops and pops and a ponderous dignity:

"Qw'eqw'elem te sth'oqwi." As I leave, I ask her if she thinks she'll have anyone to speak Halq'emeylem to in the future. "I don't think so. My daughters never wanted to learn it." She chuckles, perhaps embarrassed to be revealing her sadness to a stranger. "My older brother was the only one I could talk Native to. He died earlier this year, and I really miss him. He was my dictionary."

KITTP - Teaching Issues

(Kwakwala Immersion Teaching Training Program)

By: Colleen Hemphill (As written in the KITTP Newsletter November 15, 1996 Vol.1 #1)

Despite on going efforts to be the most effective teacher you can be, some of you face at least one of the challenges listed below that continue to impede student success with your language program. Listed below are some of the issues you've said you face:

- inadequate classroom space;
- inferior teaching area compared to space available for other teachers;
- moving large numbers of students from classroom to classroom;
- too little time to teach;
- lack of resources to buy paper, pencils and other materials required;
- room little time for curriculum development;
- ill-treatment from support staff (secretaries, etc.);
- non-support from the First Nations.

You are front line workers, the job you have is so important and yet it is often marginalized by those who do not understand what you and all our nations are up against in the enormous task of restoring our traditional language back to its rightful place win our hearts and minds.

From what is said by the elders and leaders today,

there is a growing awareness of you and what you are doing. As elder Henry George stated at the joint Kwakiutl Territorial Fisheries Commission, Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council and Kwakiutl District Council Executive Meeting held in October 23, 1996 in the U'gwamalis Hall, "Before we lose the rest of our older (people) and they are going fast. I just want to encourage all of you out there teaching Kwakwala, continue to do your good work and I will do every which way that I know how to keep supporting you people. Thank you."

"I would like to congratulate the students that went there (Gambier Island) and hopefully we do it in an appropriate manner at another date", said Chief John Henderson, Campbell River First Nations.

"I hope we can encourage the people that made that commitment and it is a big commitment and a very difficult task to keep our language alive. I think we should support them as much as we can," stated James Wilson, Cape Mudge First Nation. With this awareness comes much needed support for you as you confront the issues listed above.

Speak out, call for assistance, do not hesitate to ask

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for support from your Chief and Council or the organizations. You will be heard.

Should you want support, put your concerns in writing, ask to be on a agenda to speak at a Chief and Council meeting. Speak in the language issue. Ask the Council to write a letter or call a meeting with a school to talk about the concerns, You and the Council have a right to ask for a proper classroom in which to conduct the language and culture classes, have improved teaching conditions, longer work ours to develop curriculum and sessions, etc.

The process of change and improvement can get started by you but you must not be afraid to speak out.

In addition to the Chief and Council there is the Kwakwala Steering Committee and the Tribal Councils that can provide support and assistance.

The message is:

You are not alone. You have support for the enormously important task you are involved with.

Giftshop News

Giftshop/Project Manager: Andrea Sanborn

By the time this newsletter has arrived at your door we hope that our year end will be behind us. That is always a busy time for us counting and extending inventory figures.

It is hard to sell down the inventory as there is always someone dropping in to look at our selection in the gift shop. We have to keep up our selection for them and accept the fact that we just have to count it at year end.

We are planning for the coming summer season which is quickly approaching us. Hopefully we will see many visitors this season. The more visitors visiting us the busier we can keep the artists.

Our Cultural Activities Coordinator is planning another Blanket Making Work Shop in April '97 and we want you to know that we are the place to look for your supplies. We have a new stock of black and red melton material and a

good variety of buttons. For those interested in participating in the Blanket Making Workshop, please call us at 974-5403.

We have been in contact with all our jewelry suppliers and are now just waiting to see all the new creations for the summer season. We are hoping to have a good selection of copper jewelry soon as we are getting many requests for it.

If there is a special item that you are looking for, let us know and we will try to help you find it. We always look forward to your visits to the Centre and to serving you in the Gift Shop.

A N N O U C E M E N T S

Rene Smith Bursary Fund Five Hundred Dollar (\$500.00) Bursary

Criteria:

1. Applicant shall be a descendant of the Kwakwaka'wakw.
2. Applicant shall be a person having the required qualifications or prerequisites necessary to enter a nursing or medical related training program.
3. Applicant shall be a person enrolled or enrolling in a nursing or medical related post secondary school course.
4. Applicant shall provide a transcript of their most recent education marks or in the case of a graduating Secondary School student their grade eleven marks or most recent grade twelve report card.
5. Additional selection criteria, which will be taken into consideration:
 - Academic achievement
 - Financial need
 - Any related volunteer work
 - Any previous proven interest in the medical field
6. An outline of the applicant's career and education goals and information covering items 1 to 5 shall be admitted in writing to the Selection Committee.
7. Selection of the Bursary recipient will be made by a Committee of the U'mista Board of Directors.
8. The Bursary may be allocated at the discretion of the Committee.
9. **Applications must be received by May 30th of each year.**
10. The recipient will forfeit the Bursary if registration and acceptance in an institution of higher learning is not completed within fifteen (15) months of being awarded the Bursary.
11. Submit Application to :
 - Rene Smith Bursary Fund
 - U'mista Cultural Centre
 - P.O. Box 253
 - Alert Bay, B.C.
 - V0N 1A0

U'mista Cultural Society
Canadian Membership Form

Do you have Band Membership or can you trace ancestry to a Band member of Kwakwaka'wakw? Yes / No

If yes, give Band Name and Number:

*(**If Band Number completed, G.S.T. is not applicable**)*

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

Annual Fee: \$ 15.00

(Add \$1.05 G.S.T. if applicable)

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ Province: _____
 Country: _____ Postal Code: _____
 Res Phone: _____ Bus. Phone: _____

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

Annual Fee: \$25.00

(Add \$ 1.75 G.S.T. if applicable)

(May include up to two adults and children under 19 years of age.)

Name: (Adult #1) _____
 Mailing Address: _____
 City: _____ Province: _____
 Country: _____ Postal Code: _____
 Res Phone: _____ Bus. Phone: _____

Name (Adult #2): _____

Children Names:	Birthdate (YY/MM/DD)
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

PLEASE ENCLOSE YOUR MEMBERSHIP FEE AND MAIL TO:

U'mista Cultural Centre
 P.O. Box 253
 Alert Bay, B.C. V0N 1A0

U'mista Cultural Society
International Membership Form

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

*Annual Fee: \$ 25.00 + \$1.75 (GST) = \$26.75
(Payable in Canadian Funds, Cheque or Money Order to the U'mista Cultural Centre)*

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ Province: _____
Country: _____ Postal Code: _____
Res Phone: _____ Bus. Phone: _____

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

*Annual Fee: \$35.00 + \$2.45 (GST) = \$37.45
May include up to two adults and children up to 19 years of age.
(Payable in Canadian Funds, Cheque or Money Order to the U'mista Cultural Centre)*

Name: (Adult #1) _____
Mailing Address: _____
City: _____ Province: _____
Country: _____ Postal Code: _____
Res Phone: _____ Bus. Phone: _____

Name (Adult #2): _____

Children Names:	Birthdate (YY/MM/DD)
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____
Name: _____	D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

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Regular Hours:

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9:00am - 5:00pm

Extended Summer Hours:

Saturday, Sundays and Holidays
9:00am - 6:00pm

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