

## **A Day In The Life At The Yellow House**

In 2016 an adult language immersion program was created by Khelsilem, Dustin Rivers at Simon Fraser University alongside Kwi Awt Stelmexw, and Squamish Nation using a methodology of teaching known as Where Are Your Keys (*WAYK*). This immersion program started with the dream of creating conversational speakers in hopes to begin the movement of revitalizing the Skwxwú7mesh Sníchim (*Squamish language*).

Currently there are two programs that have been created for adult immersion using the Where Are Your Keys methodology. Each fall term since 2016 at Simon Fraser University there has been a full time certificate course for beginners to dip their feet in the water about learning the techniques of WAYK, while spending about 400-600 hours immersed in the language without any translation. In 2018 there was the first ever Skwxwú7mesh Sníchim diploma program in conjunction with Simon Fraser University. It provided an intermediate level of study for those who have completed the certificate program or had other past equivalency in studying the Squamish language, it was a part time program which ran two years long. During the first year of the diploma program, the third cohort of the certificate program was also taking place. During that time, a house was offered to be used for the purpose of language and culture on the Tsleil-Waututh Nation's reserve. This house was at the very top of the neighbourhood road, when giving directions to visitors on how to get there it became a habit for those to say "the yellow house in the middle of the cul de sac" and thus the term "Yellow House" was born.

The certificate program runs four days a week, eight hours a day from Tuesday to Thursday. While Monday and Friday are used for staff planning, assignment grading, and grocery shopping in preparations for the upcoming school week. Each day at the yellow house is structured by a "schedule wall" planned out on Fridays. The schedule wall is organized with each staff and student having a sticky note with a colour designated to them. By using sticky notes each person is able to see where they are scheduled and what activities will take place throughout the week. The schedule not only helps us keep on task but also clearly demonstrates that everyone has a responsibility by having somewhere to be, and something to do at all times. Additionally it includes a great way to plan future absences for either staff or students while making it easier for staff to create the upcoming schedule wall for the following school week. Majority of days there are multiple activities happening all at the same time in different rooms in the house, we call this "splitting the cell". By splitting the cell, everyone has a chance to rotate through different projects while learning how to do daily tasks in the language while assisting in creating curriculum.

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The schedule consists of split cells such as:

1. **Lesson Prep Cell** - A small group prepares to teach an upcoming lesson, refreshing their memory of how the lesson is run and assigning teaching roles.
2. **Lesson Teaching Cell** - a small group delivers a previously prepared lesson to a group of students who haven't yet been through the lesson.
3. **Review Cell** - a small group reviews previously taught lessons for students who were absent or would like additional practice
4. **Cooking Cell** - a small group prepares a meal for the larger group in immersion
5. **Hunting Cell** - a small group works to elicit specific language from more proficient speakers during an immersion session
6. **Lesson Scribing Cell** - a small group takes the language gleaned from a previous hunting session and refines it into a lesson
7. **Fellowship Cell** - a small group in the fellowship program works to plan a hunt, hunts from a more proficient speaker, develops a new lesson, or swaps language from recent sessions
8. **Immersion Walk** - a small group go for a walk together and explore the language on the land while staying in immersion
9. **Coffee/Tea Talk** - a small group makes a pot of coffee or a cup of tea by directing one another in specific tasks

Every one of these activities is done in immersion without translation.

Alongside the schedule wall is the "job board". Each Thursday at the end of class, staff and students can volunteer what job they would like to practice the following week. Each job has an "angel" in this case the angel is the previous person that volunteered for the job. The angels are there to help guide those with the job at hand or to step in if the person assigned to a job is absent. By everyone doing the same jobs it establishes an environment of teamwork and equality. This is also what ties the jobs board into the scheduling wall, which gives everyone a sense of purpose while also helping them step into new roles such as public speaking, group management, scheduling, programming and facilitating.

The job board consist of these jobs:

1. **Leader** - The leader will start the day each morning, guide those to where they need to be at certain times of the day, announce breaks and when to return by, and lead plus/deltas at the end of the day
2. **Scribe** - A scribe is someone who is there to write out any information needed at the time of group activities, as well as writing out plus/deltas at the end of the day

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3. **Scheduler** - The scheduler should head the the schedule wall as soon as arriving and assist staff with any last minute rearrangements that may need to be made prior to beginning the day, then when designated by the leader they will read out the schedule of the day in the morning, followed by asking anyone to share any news of upcoming absences, they can also assist alongside the leader with announcing breaks and when to return, after lunch the scheduler reviews the schedule with the group.
4. **Photographer** - The photographer is in charge of taking a photo of everything and anything that happens throughout the day. Including a photo of the schedule wall, jobs board, TQ grid, fluency freeway.
5. **Newbie catcher** - The newbie catcher is someone who should always have their eyes on the door in case anyone who may not be a part of the program needs assistance or direction of who they should be talking with. In addition to that, they should also be expecting anyone who is in fact a part of the program who may be running late or could have missed the morning meeting and need to be caught up on where they should be or what they should be doing at that time.
6. **TQ of the day** - The person running TQ of the day should think of a TQ that they may feel to be an advantage to the group to learn or have a refresher on. The technique of their choosing can be relevant to the activities on hand that day or something that may help us work together better as a team.
7. **Invisible magician** - The invisible magician does lots of magic throughout the day. Ever go to grab a cup of coffee but the pot is empty? This is what the invisible magician is here for! The main goal of their job is to have each room set up for the split cell activities scheduled to happen with all the materials needed to save minutes or even seconds off of the group preparing and instead focusing their time on being immersed and getting fluent. Even making sure the coffee pot is always full so you don't have to wait for it to brew! For example if there is a lesson teaching cell happening in the large room, the invisible magician will get all the chairs and tables needed for that lesson set up, find the lesson booklet so the teachers and students aren't spending time looking for it, and also briefly checking over the lesson for any props or materials needed and having them ready.
8. **Meal captain** - The meal captains job is during the morning meeting. They do a quick head count of who is eating when the leader announces what will be prepped by the cooking cell that day. Followed by sending around a clipboard with all staff and students names, for each person who is eating that day to check off their name for reference of the cooking cell

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to know how much to cook as well as for staff to keep track of future meal payments

9. **Turbo scanner** - The turbo scanner is to take scans using the turbo scan app. They should take scans of the schedule wall (before and after any changes are made), jobs board, any information written out by the scribe during group activities, and the plus/deltas. Each scan is printed off and placed in the daily log binder to keep record of what happened during that day.

To be able to do all the activities mentioned above in immersion without translation is thanks to the amazing techniques (*TQ's*) created and used by Where Are Your Keys. Techniques are a tool used by teachers and learners to eliminate the need of breaking immersion of the target language or resorting to translating to English, this also helps keep the flow of learning without stopping. These techniques use a form of American Sign Language (*ASL*) to help teachers and students signal what they may need without breaking immersion and interrupting a lecture, or lesson. For example there is a technique called "slow down" if a teacher is moving through a lesson too quickly, the student can show the hand sign for "slow down" and the teacher can see exactly what the learner needs by modifying the learning environment while decreasing anxiety and or distraction. As of today there are about 400 techniques, many which have been made up and contracted through trial and error.

Techniques are just the tip of the iceberg as to what WAYK is and how it plays a huge part in the way the *skwxwú7mesh sníchim* is taught and learned in the immersion programs offered. Due to WAYK's game-based approach at the target language, it relinquishes the traditional approach to classroom language learning and focuses more on creating an interactive space between the native speaker and the learner.

Around the last hour of each day, the staff and students participate in an activity called D.I.S.H (*Daily Immersion Skwxwú7mesh Hunts*). During D.I.S.H the staff and students complete a variety of chores together while in immersion. This is a time for students to hunt any language they are tracking and try to use it during household chores. These chores not only help in keeping the yellow house pristine and organized, but it also provides students one on one time with a more proficient speaker while providing an opportunity to learn language that can be used at home and outside of the school environment. Such as previous jobs mentioned, each student and staff member will rotate through the D.I.S.H wheel in order to practice different pieces of language in different areas of the house while sharing equal work loads

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The D.I.S.H wheel focuses on these chores:

- 1. Kitchen** - Wash all dishes, dry and dishes that do not fit in the drainer, put away any dry dishes, wipe out the sink, clean out the drain plug, wipe down counters, wipe out microwave, make a to-go cup of coffee for swú7wu with any leftover coffee in the coffee pot, empty and turn off coffee maker, reset the coffee maker for the morning, put all used dish towels in the laundry basket, put out clean dish towels
- 2. Garbage & Recycling** - Rinse all bottles/containers, sort kitchen recycling, separate refundable items (cans, juice cartons, etc.) into blue bin outside the garage, collect paper recycling from other rooms, empty garbage cans in all rooms and replace bags, double check all rooms and outside for trash or abandoned snacks/drinks/food, empty kitchen trash, put kitchen compost in garage freezer, wipe out compost bins and replace bags, on trash days bringing the bins back up from the curb
- 3. Floors** - Put away any tables in living room and bedrooms, stack chairs in the corner of the living room and bedrooms, vacuum the small bedroom, vacuum the big bedroom, vacuum the living room, sweep the kitchen and hallway floor, mop the kitchen and hallway floor, shake out or vacuum the front and back door entry mats
- 4. Bathroom/Laundry** - Wipe down counters, wipe out the sink, clean both inside and out of toilet, wipe down the mirror, clean and rinse shower walls and tub, check that there are 3 extra rolls of toilet paper under the sink, sweep and mop floor, put all used hand towels in the laundry basket, put out clean hand towels
- 5. Tornado Of Tidy** - Put away papers, lessons, and swim lane folders, put away extra props, reset pen/sticky note stations in each room, move any unclaimed personal items to “found items” box in the garage, remove any clutter, check outside for any unclaimed items
- 6. Garden/Outside** - Water the cedar trees in the meadow, water plants in the backyard garden, water plants in the front of the house, check for weeds, check for knotweed, help bring outside items inside that can't stay out overnight
- 7. Taskmasters** - Check in with the teams and what their set up is for today, language support for teams around their set up, remind teams to record their mini hunts, check in with all teams to make sure they have all the supplies and support to finish their jobs, substitute in as needed for tasks that are missing a team member, assist with tidying tasks
- 8. Scheduling Meeting** - Those assigned to the scheduling meeting will assist a few staff members in looking over the schedule wall to make sure the activities planned for the following day are still in motion. As well as

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planning as far ahead as they can to make scheduling easier for the Friday team.

After D.I.S.H the students and teachers will meet in the living room for Plus/Deltas. Plus/Deltas is a feedback activity led by the leader of the day and the scribe. During this time students and staff can share what they liked and what they would have changed about the day. Deltas can range from an opinion on how a lesson could be run easier, more breaks were needed or even their own personal feelings such as having a harder morning or how they were running late. All constructive criticism is appreciated as it is used by staff to better plan how to provide the best learning environment. During this time if someone expresses a thought that is relatable, others can throw the ASL for a star, by starring a plus or delta it is letting others know that point is something many agree with. The end of the plus/deltas is ended by this phrase “plus/deltas going once, going twice, sold!” followed by everyone clapping at the same time to put an end to the day.