



PRESS RELEASE

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Tlingit & Haida Awarded Grant for Tlingit Language Immersion Nest

Juneau, AK (July 31, 2018) – Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) has been awarded a \$1 million, three-year Native American Language Preservation and Maintenance-Esther Martinez Immersion grant through the Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Native Americans (ANA) to establish and operate a Tlingit Language Immersion Nest (*Haa Yóo X'atángi Kúdi*). As the Cultural Heritage & Education Manager, Sarah Dybdahl will administer the grant and oversee the development of the *Haa Yóo X'atángi Kúdi*.

The *Haa Yóo X'atángi Kúdi* will serve as a pilot program and model to expand and create language immersion programs for *Xaadas Kil* and *Sm'algyax*. During the three-year grant, the *Haa Yóo X'atángi Kúdi* goals are to create an environment for tribally-enrolled children ages 3-5 to be immersed in the Tlingit language, provide training and development opportunities for language instructors, and ensure families are supported and provided the resources needed to be on this language journey with their children.

“Our vision is to see our children fully fluent in their indigenous language,” said Sarah Dybdahl. “It has been a long-term goal to have a language immersion nest in Juneau and this is just one of many exciting initiatives Tlingit & Haida is working on to support our Southeast Alaska indigenous languages. While this language immersion nest is focused on Tlingit, we are committed to fostering partnerships that support language preservation efforts. During this year’s Tribal Assembly, we raised nearly \$45,000, of which \$15,000 was donated to the *Xaadas Kil Kuyaas* Foundation and *Haayk* Foundation to support the *Xaadas Kil* and *Sm'algyax* languages.”

Language immersion schools in Hawaii, New Zealand, and within the Mohawk and Ojibwe tribes have seen great success with graduation rates as high as 100%, college placement as high as 100%, and have achieved some of the highest test scores in standardized testing in English while their children achieve total fluency in their indigenous language.

“Our languages are in a state of emergency and it’s undeniable that the health of our children is directly tied to our languages,” said President Richard (*Chalyee Éesh*) Peterson. “We must do everything we can to perpetuate our languages and cultures, and I hope to one day have a full language immersion tribal school for all Southeast indigenous languages.”



Mary (*Daaljini*) Folletti teaches Tlingit to pre-school students during Tlingit Toddler Time.

Mission of the Haa Yoo X'atangi Kúdi:

Tlingit: *Hél anák gaxtoo.aat. Xaat yáx yatee haa yoo x'atangi, ka a káx áwé Haa Yoo X'atangi Kúdi wududliyéx. Aas jiséiyix' áwé woosh tudzixán haa kusteeyi tóonáx. Haa Aaní kanax ch'u tleix Haa Léelk'u Hás sagaxtoo.áax, aag aa woosh jín gaxtoolsháat yeisú kaa toowú latseen tín.*

English: We are not going to walk away from it. Our language is like a tree root, and upon it Our Language Nest was built. In the shelter of a tree we love one another through Our Way of Life. On Our Land we will forever hear the voices of our grandparents, and then we will still be holding each other's hands with strength of spirit.

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