

ĖyetinĖťsinĖhshĖ'
Immersed Learning Nest (ĖILN)
"We will bring them along"
Enrollment Packet



Mission

Our mission is to directly support children's natural acquisition of the Seneca language, so they can best develop and function as fully bilingual speakers. We do this through the following strategies:

- Increase time immersed in Seneca language interactions, with an emphasis on low ratio experiences with our highly conversational staff
- Encourage children's engagement in Seneca language via accompanied play, storytelling, and use of songs throughout the day
- Foster the child's reliance on Seneca language as their means of communication via personalized interactions, targeted skill-development, and specific language prompts
- Showcase our community of speakers, including staff, preverbal peers, and speaking peers.
- Directly develop each child's fluent comprehension of Seneca language through wide-reaching experiences while immersed
- Maintain an environment that consistently encourages the emergence of new bilingual Seneca speech

Throughout our day, we provide an atmosphere that best supports the children's developing language, inspired by the land, seasonal changes, and our ceremonial way of life. Within the Nest, we mirror parents' intensive efforts at home by providing immersive care and accompaniment for their child throughout our weekday programming. Our work is meant to supplement a parent's immersive Seneca language use with their child, offering access to a speaking community of advanced second language speakers and first-language peers, age-appropriate programming, songs, and storytelling.

Our Nest is now in its third year of operation. We have serviced a total of 11 children from 8 families since piloting in February 2021. We are now hosted within the Seneca Nation's Early Childhood Learning Center, which allows us access to this facility's amenities, but also access to the beautiful Clear Creek landscape and an abundance of wildlife to witness throughout our daily excursions.

The child's primary caregiver is the first and most important speaker in his/her child's life. We expect this caregiver to be conversational, and to lean on their Seneca speech primarily, if not exclusively, throughout interactions with their child. In other words, this primary caregiver should be using the language throughout routine tasks as well as in meaningful interactions, including new experiences, consoling, responding to difficult behavior.



OUR STAFF

Whitney Nephew, "Yeda:ke's"

Whitney Nephew, "Yeda:ke's" (they call her), serves as an Immersed Learning Lead Facilitator. Her father is Seneca Deer clan, through the Seneca-Cayuga of Oklahoma rolls. She resides with the Cattaraugus community with her partner and daughter, now age 7.

"Yeda:ke's" studied with Deadiwēnōhsnye's Gējohgwa' Immersion, beginning in 2016, and continued there through years of advanced language study. She is certified in TESOL for Children. Her passion is her immersed relationship with her daughter Mira, who is now a fully bilingual speaker. She is energized by the families who have also created immersive homes, and paying it forward to those who will soon be our youngest speaking peers in the community. "Yeda:ke's" is new to traditional singing, but loves using the language in song form, including making new songs and leading immersive storytelling.

Sara Droney, "Awëö'"

Sara Droney, "Awëö'" (they call her), serves as an Immersed Learning Lead Facilitator. Her father is Seneca Wolf clan. She resides with the Allegany community with her partner and two children, ages 10 and 1.

"Awëö'" has served as a Language Apprentice with the Allegany Language program in 2016, while also pursuing constant, intensive language study as a personal endeavor for several years. She has worked with the Faithkeepers' School at Jo:negano:h, where she achieved Montessori certification. She is passionate about maintaining a language intensive homelife for her older son, Iowa, while now also parenting exclusively in Seneca language for her youngest son, Oren. Awëö' lends her creative vision, resourcefulness, and highly detailed language to enriching all our play, adventures, songs and stories.

Barbara Cooke, Geñhyuweñnuhna'

Barbara Cooke, Geñhyuweñnuhna' niyagohsēno'dēh (is her clan name), or "Nuhna'" as our kids call her, serves as our Nest Coordinator. She is Onondaga Deer clan. She resides with the Cattaraugus community with her partner, their 3 kids, and now awaiting one more!

Nuhna' is a highly experienced early childhood educator with who has worked in various OCFS settings and with a wide age range. Early in her career she worked closely with first-language elders, and has studied both Seneca and Onondaga languages. She has served as Cultural Coordinator at the ECLC, and is especially skilled in sharing social songs and dances with our kids, while also bringing staff along in this skillset. Nuhna' joined our team soon after our pilot months, and has been integral in executing our vision and in leading our staff's professional growth.

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CHILD INFO

Legal Name: _____ Clan Name: _____

DOB: _____ Due date (if born 2+ weeks early): _____

Current Program or childcare situation: _____

Home Address: _____

CAREGIVER INFO - 1 - (this caregiver should be the conversational speaker)

Legal Name: _____ Clan Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Nation & Clan: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Email: _____

Employer & Job Title: _____

CAREGIVER INFO - 2 -

Legal Name: _____ Clan Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Nation & Clan: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Email: _____

Employer & Job Title: _____

Is this caregiver ALSO a conversational speaker of Seneca Language? _____

HOUSEHOLD INFO

Other children in home (and ages): _____

Please outline if any custody arrangements affect your child who may take part in our Nest: _____

Written Personal Responses

Please respond in whatever way you feel will be most meaningful and informative to our staff. You are welcome to use any additional paper OR email responses as well.

Please describe your experience as a conversational speaker of the Seneca language (may include: where and with whom you've studied, who you regularly converse with, what elders you have worked with, personal accomplishments regarding your Seneca speech).

Please describe the language make-up of your home. Who speaks what language, how often, and/or when...

In what ways has your commitment to language use with your child influenced your approach to parenting, and/or your lifestyle?

Tell us about who you receive support from... Who else provides conversational Seneca language to your child? Who all helps you "behind the scenes" amidst the responsibilities you manage? Who helps you grow?

Tell us about your favorite time of day or your favorite daily activity for language use with your child... what makes this such a special time?

Tell us about your most challenging daily or weekly interaction you face as you work to parent in Seneca language... what makes this time such a challenge?

Tell us about some new language (words or phrases) you've recently learned and how you've shared this with your child.

Every child has their struggles in these early years, and beyond! Tell us specifically, what phrases do you use to soothe your child during difficult behaviors. How has this language changed over time, if at all?

Describe an uplifting interaction (however small!) with your child that is helping you feel inspired.

In what ways do you imagine your child's participation in our program will support your household and/or your parenting in language?

TO BE COMPLETED BY STAFF

Date Application was Completed and Received: _____

Parent Language Proficiency Check

To be completed by the staff member(s) who can attest to the parent's speaking capacity and conversational ability, per a recent conversation regarding everyday topics.

Date of conversation: _____ Duration: _____

Nature of discussion: _____

Areas of concern: _____

Recommendation for child placement: _____

I attest that the parent participated in functional conversation without relying on English to maintain understandable, unscripted dialog.

Staff Name - printed

Staff Signature

Date

Staff Name - printed

Staff Signature

Date

Staff Name - printed

Staff Signature

Date