

# PULLING TOGETHER



I'XEL SQ'EQ'OTEL

Éy St'elmexw St'elt'ilém / Good Medicine Songs  
Song & Storybook - Chapter 4

# ÉY ST'ÉLMEXW ST'ELT'ÍLÉM

## GOOD MEDICINE SONGS

### SONG & STORYBOOK – CHAPTER 3

The three songs in this Songbook were written at our third songwriting retreat in the summer of 2022. The core members and songwriters of our Good Medicine Songs family gathered for three days at Forest Echoes Cabins by Cultus Lake.

Our practise is to have an idea, a teaching or a concept that is our starting point for a song. We begin each day's session with an opening prayer and song. We ask the ancestors to guide our work. Fragments of lyric ideas and phrases in Halq'eméylem are woven together and explored musically. We always have drums and rattles, and the cajon (box drum.) The dulcimer or piano provide the melodic base. When a rhythm or melody emerges we follow it, develop it, expand it with more lyrics until a song takes form.

Some songs reach a threshold where we can sing them right away; everyone can feel that it has been birthed. Others take longer. The first song we tackled, St'et'il te Temexw Xwela ye Sqweltel/The Land is Lonesome for the Language took shape quickly; by the afternoon of Day 1 we were singing the roof of the studio off. The song had such power, it rocked! The second song, Stam qwe Seliw I te Sitel?/What is in the Basket?, was more intensive, we had to dig deeper to find its soul. We worked on it through the second day, and recorded an initial version on the morning of Day 3. (We didn't actually complete the song until a half year later; it needed more time.) Then, after lunch on Day 3, everyone was getting ready to leave; we still needed our third song. A guitar chord progression started us off. On the steps outside we started playing I'xel Sq'eq'otel/Pulling Together with drums and rattles. The surrounding mountains blessed us and rang out. We all tumbled home happy and elated with the songs that had been gifted to us. Once again, the ancestors were with us.

We really wanted to keep writing songs while we could with our dear Elder Siyamiyateliyot. We give special thanks to the Stó:lō Shxweli Language Program for providing the funds for the Songwriting Retreat, so we could keep working in the summer of 2022, and these songs could come into being. In fall 2022 we applied for a grant from the First Peoples' Cultural Council to record the three New Songs and produce this Songbook and share everything out with our community. We are very grateful for their support.

So here we are, dear reader and singer! You'll find MP3s and audio glossaries for these songs, and this Songbook at [www.GoodMedicineSongs.ca](http://www.GoodMedicineSongs.ca). We hope these songs bring healing and joy to your world. The next three... are already on the way!

# I'XEL SQ'EQ'OTEL/PULLING TOGETHER SONG & STORYBOOK

**Presented by Éy St'élmexw St'elt'ílém / Good Medicine Songs  
& the Artist Response Team (ART)**

The core members and songwriters of the Good Medicine Songs family are Stó:lō language and cultural carriers Dr. Siyamiateliyot Elizabeth Phillips, T'it'elem Spath Eddie Gardner, Dr. Lolehawk Laura Buker, Xótxwes Jonny Williams and singer/songwriter/producers Holly Arntzen and Kevin Wright of the Wilds Band and Artist Response Team (ART).

The late Dr. Stelomethet Ethel Gardner, was a co-founder of Good Medicine Songs. Her dream for the language was to hear it alive throughout the community, people singing and speaking Halq'eméylem everywhere.

**Indigenous Lead:** Dr. Lolehawk Laura Buker

**Project Producer:** Holly Arntzen

**Project Administration:** Jenny Arntzen

**Illustrations:** Bon Graham

**Graphic Design & Audio Mixing:** Kevin Wright

**Additional Vocals:** Sulisulwut Bibiana Norris

**Songs recorded at:** Downe Under Studios, Soren Lonnqvist, Abbotsford

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the First Peoples' Cultural Council.

Special thanks to Willow Mussell for helping us get the grant application written!

For more information please contact Holly Arntzen: [artistresponseteam@telus.net](mailto:artistresponseteam@telus.net)

[www.GoodMedicineSongs.ca](http://www.GoodMedicineSongs.ca)

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**GOOD MEDICINE SONGS**





# ST'ET'IL TE TEMEXW XWELA YE SQWELTEL THE LAND IS LONESOME FOR THE LANGUAGE

Dr. Siyamiateliyot Elizabeth Phillips, our last remaining fluent speaker of Halq'eméylem, was born with the language as her mother tongue. Her mother didn't speak a word of English. Siyamiateliyot would translate for her family with people like the Indian Agent and store keepers. Even when she was taken away to residential school as a young girl, she always thought in Halq'eméylem so she wouldn't forget. She'd talk out loud to her imaginary friends and her mom and dad. That was her safety net, her connection with her mom and dad. Remembering those stories, those conversations and fun times she had, that's what helped her hold onto the language. When she became an adult, she got together with the linguists and helped create our written language. In effect, she was recruited as an Elder at the age of 35. As the old speakers passed on, she had no one to speak the language with. She was lonely to hear it.

Siyamiateliyot talks about how it helps the land for us to speak in Halq'eméylem. We're all given our own languages in our own territories where we're from; that land knows only that language. If one of us goes to Asia and tries to talk Halq'eméylem to that land, that land is not going to understand us. That's why it's confusing for the land to hear all the foreign languages that are spoken now in Stó:lō territory. The land doesn't understand those other languages. Our ancestors never spoke English. Back before contact, all the land knew was Halq'eméylem. Our land only knows our language. That's why the Creator gave it to us, so we could communicate with the land in our own way.

Traditionally it was our way of life, our language was our only way of communicating. It was an oral history. Today it's a lot different. We've had to learn English to tell our stories. Adding even one or two Halq'eméylem words helps keep our culture and make the story real. All our stories are about the land, the river, the mountains, the sky. We have those words in Halq'eméylem and those words make it true. We can say one word in Halq'eméylem, or a whole paragraph in English. If the people understand that one word, it's known. We don't have to explain it.

In our culture we look for guidance from our ancestors. All cultures have someone they pray to; go to church, talk to God, Buddha, Allah. We Stó:lō people have our ancestors everywhere: the ground we walk on, the trees that blow around us, the river that flows past us. We don't have to go to a temple to pray. We can sit in our home and close our eyes and ask the ancestors to listen. Or go outside for a walk, we are connected with the animals, the four leggeds, the winged ones, the swimmers. Everywhere we take a step, we have ancestors listening. They always get our message. If we are paying attention and listening things can go smoothly. If we're falling off track, if we're not doing what the ancestors want us to do, they slow us down and tell us to stop rushing, pay attention.

When we speak Halq'eméylem our ancestors can understand us better. When we know more language we're able to hear more clearly. Hear the messages in the wind, the water, in nature. We are more connected to the land, and the land feels less lonely. As the knowledge of the land comes through the language and forms the stories and songs, we become more connected with the land, in love with the land, and we are inspired restore the land and waters.

**E'tset o:lhēt qas ste'alstexw ye s'iwes ye syewalelh tset  
In honouring and valuing teachings of our ancestors**

**Aylexwstexw te sqwelta tset qesetu ste'astexw shxwtalimstolem  
Revitalizing our Halq'eméylem language and living our culture**



# ST'ET'IL TE TEMEXW XWELA YE SQWELTEL THE LAND IS LONESOME FOR THE LANGUAGE

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**SPOKEN:** “Hikwstewx te sqwelta tset!  
We hold our language high!”

The land is lonesome for the language

The land is lonesome for the language

The ancestors are always listening

The land is lonesome for the language

**CHANT:** Oh – oh – oh – oh - oh

St’et’il te temexw xwela ye sqwelta

St’et’il te temexw xwela ye sqwelta

Xwelela ye xwel-xwo-lexw-yam

St’et’il te temexw xwela ye sqwelta

**CHANT:** Oh – oh – oh – oh - oh

Listen to the language  
Xwelelam te sqwelta

Learn the language  
Toti:lt te sqwelta

Speak the language  
Xwemlexwqel

Sing the language  
T’ilem te sqwelta

**CHANT:** Oh – oh – oh – oh - oh

The land is lonesome for the language  
St’et’il te temexw xwela ye sqwelta  
St’et’il te temexw xwela ye sqwelta



Photo: Jordon Fernandez



# STAM KWE SELIW I TE SI:TEL?



WHAT IS IN THE BASKET?

## STAM KWE SELIW I TE SI:TEL? WHAT IS IN THE BASKET?

### LOY KWESU TÉL:EXWTSET TE SQ'EQ'ÓTEL S'ÁYLEXW LHE'A TE S'EYELH WE HAVE TO LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER IN A GOOD WAY

The Stó:lō people traditionally had many, many baskets for just about everything. There were weaving patterns that conveyed teachings of many different kinds. We weave in our teachings, our life. Those patterns are our teachings. Every person makes their basket in their own way, so we knew where it came from.

Someone may have a basket made by their grandma. She would have gone up the mountain to ask the roots. All the teachings were woven into that basket: the respect for the land, the giveaway of the plants. If you're the weaver, being humble and prepared to walk in a good way, as best you can. Basket makers wove the land, the knowledge, the kindness, the cycle of the stars, the sun, the moon, the tides, the world, the waters--are all held in the basket. This is the weaving that we have; the basket holds knowledge and wisdom so that seven generations ahead, new people are receiving these teachings.

Our ancestors tell us that we all feed from the basket of wisdom (tomel si:tel.) How we are now, how we're supposed to carry ourselves, is our legacy for seven generations ahead. Think back seven generations, how they carried themselves. They made sure everything was in the basket that we needed, for us to use.

Our beloved Elder, Dr. Siyamiateliyot tells this story: "My grandmother wanted a sqwemay--a dog. She fell in love with this particular dog. She made a si:tel--a basket--to trade with the storekeeper for the sqwemay. My grandmother spoke S'omela (Thompson) and Halq'eméylem, but she liked the Xwelitem (other backgrounds) name for si:tel: basket. So that's what she called her sqwemay; it was called "Basket", the dog!

### STAM KW'E IXW SELIW STEXW IT'E SALETTEL? WHAT ARE YOU PUTTING IN YOUR BASKETS?



Photo: Jordan Fernandez

Sept. 28, 2023 Chowiyes/Xwithet - Rise Up/Wake Up event (2nd annual) at the University of the Fraser Valley. Featuring Good Medicine Songs at the Gathering Place at the Chilliwack campus.

UFV Acting President and Vice Chancellor, Dr. James Mandigo, places the basket above the entrance.

The basket was gifted to UFV in ceremony by the family of Dr. Lolehawk Laura Buker, professor of Indigenous Studies and member of Good Medicine Songs.

The basket holds teachings, knowledge and wisdom that are shared from the ancestors to future generations.



# STAM KWE SELIW I TE SI:TEL? WHAT IS IN THE BASKET?

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Stam kwe seliw i te si:tel?  
Stam kwe seliw i te si:tel?  
S'iwes... Tolmel... Xwe'eywelh

What is in the basket?  
What is in the basket?  
Teachings... wisdom... kindness

O'lhet t'omiyeqw  
O'lhet t'omiyeqw  
O siam xa xa si:tel

Honouring seven generations  
Honouring seven generations  
Thank you sacred basket

Cheta kwomkwem - we grow stronger!  
Cheta kwomkwem - we grow stronger!  
Cheta kwomkwem - we grow stronger!

SPOKEN:

Stam yexw kw'e ilh seliw li te si:tel  
Reach back to see what was in the basket  
Stam kw'e ixw seliw stexw li te si:tel?  
What are you putting in your basket?

Cheta kwomkwem - we grow stronger!  
Cheta kwomkwem - we grow stronger!  
Cheta kwomkwem - we grow stronger!

Cheta kwomkwem - we grow stronger!  
Cheta kwomkwem - we grow stronger!  
Cheta kwomkwem - we grow stronger!

O siam xa xa si:tel

**CHETA KWOMKWEM - WE GROW STRONGER!  
CHETA KWOMKWEM - WE GROW STRONGER!  
CHETA KWOMKWEM - WE GROW STRONGER!**



Photo: Kevin Moore

Siyamiyateliyot holds a basket outside  
Downe Under Studios on recording day,  
July 9, 2023

# PULLING TOGETHER



I'XEL SQ'EQ'OTEL



# IXEL SQ'EQ'OTEL PULLING TOGETHER

(INSTRUMENTAL)

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Our Stó:lō teachings tell us that we need to pull together. It's a way of moving together. We've always been taught to be of one mind, one heart, one breath, one stroke to move the canoe forward. If we're pulling together it moves a lot smoother.

Pulling together in a canoe is a lesson for how we need to act in everyday life. We have one home that we all share. Everybody needs to be part of that one mind, one heart, one stroke. It takes everyone to pull together in our home to make it a home. You got the fisher, hunter, gatherer, the cooking and cleaning. Child care. Elder care. Everyone provides something to the home. The same is true for our community—everyone provides something.

Pulling together helps us to live more in harmony with Mother Earth. It helps us to deal with difficult and challenging problems that can only be solved with cooperative action by all members of our community. When you're not pulling together it makes it a hard ride. If someone is not doing their job, it puts stress on someone else to paddle for us. If I slack off, I put it onto you to take up my slack. When we're all on that same page—pulling together, walking, running, even breathing together—that's how we can take care. We have to be able to do it together. If we can't it makes everything harder.

The Stó:lō peoples have lived in our territory for thousands of years. Now we have many more hundreds of thousands of people who have come to live in our territory. Everyone has a responsibility to take care of the land and the waters. It's everyone's job. When we pull together and work together, then we can protect Mother Earth and this beautiful place that is our home.

Our Stó:lō teachings foster our values of unity, respect, cooperation and community care.

## YÓYES SQ'EQ'ÓTEL LHE'Á TE S'ÉYELH – WORKING TOGETHER IN A GOOD WAY.



Photo: Kevin Moore

Good Medicine Songs team at the 4th Annual Songwriting Retreat  
Artist Response Team headquarters - August 2023 - new songs already coming!