



Matika Wilbur Photography, Project 562

Pend d'Oreille Elder Stephen Small Salmon is a fluent Salish speaker and works at the N'kwusm Salish School in Montana. He began working at the immersion school because in his lifetime he saw fluency in Salish fall from 100 percent to only 10 percent. Language immersion can be key to helping young Native people know and understand their cultures. The N'kwusm Salish School's goal is to bring the language back to the people. Small Salmon says, "I spoke the language all my life. I went to boarding school, but my mom, dad, and grandparents all talked Indian to me when I came home. So I was honored for that. I have a drummers group. I dance to honor the elders that came before me. I enjoy working with kids, especially the little ones. They're really happy all the time. I never did think that we would lose our language, but I can truly say we almost did. And so today, we do our best to save it."

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