

Stoney Creek is Alive: an interpretation of the concept of *shxwelí* (sh-hway-LEE)

*In Halq'eméylem, the language of the Stó:lō people, **shxwelí** means “spirit; life force; spiritual bond connecting all things.” The belief in Shxwelí emphasizes the need for a respectful relationship with the land and its resources.*



Stoney Creek is like a living being with a quiet intelligence and purpose deeply connected to its surroundings.

The creek behaves like a biological entity in the landscape. It has a metabolic cycle, taking in nourishment (rainwater and snowmelt) from the land, keeping what it needs to sustain its flow. It digests organic material (leaves, sediment, and decaying matter) and transforms it through the work of microorganisms into nutrients that feed the community of fish, insects, and plants that live in its waters and on its shores.

It has the kind of “intelligence” found within natural systems. It is self-regulating, adjusting its flow and width to accommodate heavy rainfall. It knows how to reshape itself

after floods, to carve new channels when blocked. It adjusts its rhythms according to the seasons: swelling with spring runoff; receding during summer droughts. It even communicates: by rising and falling and changing colour, it signals variations in weather or upstream activity.

Because it sustains living communities, Stoney Creek is vital to the landscape. It reminds us there is an intelligence, a wisdom, not of a conscious intellect, but of a deeper, intuitive force that transcends thought.

(Created with assistance from A.I.)