

Salish Numbers and the Worldview Inside Them

Extension Document 001

A first deep dive into Salish number words as root-family fields, embodied counting patterns, and worldview-bearing structures.

Purpose

To show that even the most familiar school topic—counting—can open into root families, bodily orientation, and Salish ways of structuring meaning.

This document is for learners, teachers, and curious readers who want to move beyond one-to-one vocabulary matching and begin seeing how number words connect to gesture, relation, grouping, sequence, and worldview.

Why begin with numbers?

Colors and numbers are often treated as the easiest first lessons in language teaching because they seem to match neatly from English into Salish. That can make them useful as a doorway, but it can also create the false impression that language learning is simply a matter of memorizing labels. This document starts with that familiar doorway and then opens it wider. The goal is not to replace usable counting words with abstract theory, but to show that the number words themselves already carry structure, relation, and perspective.

How to read this document

Each number is presented as more than a numeral. The entries look at the root-family field around the number, the hand-counting or bodily pattern that helps ground it, selected related words that widen the field of orientation, and a worldview bridge that helps make the pattern understandable in clear public-facing language. The intent is depth without technical overload.

The counting arc in brief

Taken together, the first ten numbers show a meaningful progression: one as centered singularity, two as individualization into distinct related units, three as the embodied midpoint of one hand, four as steady four-point assurance, five as the full outward display of one hand, six as the first outward-offset point on the other hand, seven as a small relational contact-step, eight as outward emergence while a core remains held, nine as the final carried threshold-state before closure, and ten as the full projection of all fingers open.

One — nk^wuw, nk^wu?

Centered singularity, unity, becoming one

Element	Gloss	Function in this number
nk ^w	one, single	a centered singularity that can also extend into unity, agreement, and belonging
-uw	inherently central	holds the numeral as a distinct central unit

In this family, one is not only the first point in a list. It is a centered singularity that can become relational: things become one, are made one, agree as one, or live as one group. This is why the same root-family reaches naturally into family and peoplehood.

Selected related words in the field

- nk^wusm — *family*. a well-known word showing that one extends into relational unity and belonging
- nk^welyx^w — *one group of people; family, tribe, nation*. one as a social grouping
- ʕs nk^wwmnwé?ex^wy — *they are becoming one with each other; they agree*. agreement as becoming one
- nk^wuwmsts — *s/he made it be one*. one as something brought into unity

Worldview bridge: The field around one demonstrates one of the main themes of this document: number words are not locked inside arithmetic. They can open into relation, belonging, and social meaning.



Two — ʃsel, esél

Individualization into distinct related units

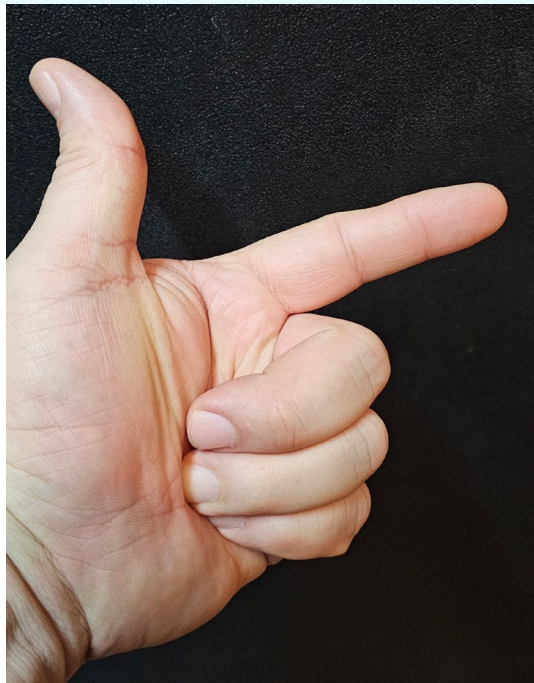
Element	Gloss	Function in this number
ʃs	individualization	distinct units emerge within one field; divergence is a visible effect of that deeper pattern
-el	embodied function	gives the pair an active functioning presence

Two is not just separation. It is the emergence of distinct related units within one field. That is why the same root-family can extend from the numeral two into gathering distinct scattered things, asking after the condition of a distinct being, and naming kinds or differentiated states.

Selected related words in the field

- **ʃsʃsčen** — *How is s/he/it now? What happened?* a familiar early phrase that asks after the present condition of a distinct being
- **ʃsčen** — *gather things up one at a time; pick through scattered things.* individualized items engaged one by one
- **ʃasšm** — *backbone.* a shared whole understood through distinct articulated segments
- **ʃistč** — *winter.* a season of dispersed, separated, or individually situated living

Worldview bridge: This section is especially useful for teaching because many learners already know **ʃsʃsčen**. Showing it in the same field as two gives an immediate bridge from familiar phrase-learning into deeper structure.



Three — čřles, četlé

The embodied midpoint and revealed pass-through of one hand

Element	Gloss	Function in this number
čř	open, unveil, remove	a bringing into view by uncovering or opening
-ř	carry through; pass through	the count moves onward through a revealed opening
-l	relational function	lays the numeral into the hand-count structure
-es	embodied designed presence	three is grounded in the hand's visible midpoint

If five is the full spread of one hand, then three is the midpoint of that field. The number is recognized through the revealing of the middle finger: a pass-through point where the one-hand count is visibly centered. That is why the form is embodied rather than merely sequential.

Selected related words in the field

- **čřčřest** — *nasty, vulgar, obscene*. what is unveiled or uncovered socially
- **čřx^w** — *remove outer form; unveil idea or plan*. revelation by removing an outer layer
- **čřhek^w** — *detach; separate with effort*. opening by pulling off an outer portion
- **čřl** — *alert*. an uncovered state of awareness

Worldview bridge: Three shows how the counting system is not abstract. The hand itself creates the structure: the third point is felt as the visible center of one complete hand-field.



Four — mus

Steady four-point assurance through touch and relation

Element	Gloss	Function in this number
ms	assure; four	stable assurance grounded in four-point contact
mes	be the assurance	the active or embodied presence of dependable support
mus	four, feel, steady	the felt and enacted side of that stable hand-pattern

Four is grounded in the four extended fingers as a stable contact pattern. Those fingers steady the hand and help it feel its way in the world. From that same base come confidence, hope, dependable support, and even kinship roles. Four is not only quantity; it is a structure of assurance.

Selected related words in the field

- **musm** — *feel about with the hand/four fingers.* the four-finger pattern as tactile exploration
- **musčst** — *do one's best with confidence.* acting steadily from a grounded pattern
- **nmusls** — *hope; confident feelings.* inward confidence built on steadiness
- **mestm** — *father of a female; made to be the assurance.* dependable social grounding in kinship

Worldview bridge: The four-family is one of the strongest demonstrations of how a number root can widen into bodily action, feeling, confidence, and social relation without losing coherence.



Five — cil

Full outward display of the one-hand count

Element	Gloss	Function in this number
cl	outstretch, erect, five	the process or orientation of bringing a full set outward into display
cil	five, erected	the resultative state of that full outstretch
clčst	five as the hand held outward	the explicit full-hand counting display

Five completes the one-hand count. The hand is fully outstretched, with all five fingers displayed. This makes five not only a quantity word, but the visible completion of the first counting field. The root-family also extends into ideas of standing upright, being pitched up, or holding full outward form.

Selected related words in the field

- **clčstasq̄t** — *Friday; five days*. five as sequence completion within a named cycle
- **čcilcl** — *five people*. a recognized set of five
- **ccilš** — *camp overnight*. a related family path where set-up or erected temporary arrangement remains visible
- **clčsq̄tq̄it** — *pentagon*. five straight connected lines

Worldview bridge: The distinction between cl and cil matters: cl profiles the outward extension, while cil presents the achieved result of that extension as a recognized set.



Six — táq̓n

The first outward-offset point beyond the completed hand

Element	Gloss	Function in this number
táq̓	positioned out away	a distinct point set off to the side or beyond the current line
-n	act at/with/to	anchors that offset point as an active counting position

Six begins the second hand. After five completes one full set, the next point appears out away on the other hand. This is why six feels like an offset placement rather than simply “five plus one.” It opens a new counting field beyond the first completed one.

Selected related words in the field

- **čtáq̓šn** — *raise the leg up to the side, out away.* clear body-image support for the root
- **táq̓t / stáq̓t** — *geese flying in formation.* outward points set off from a center line
- **ntq̓mew̓s** — *sitting by each other but not directly next to each other.* relational offset rather than merger

Worldview bridge: Six is a turning point in the sequence. It shows that moving into the second hand is encoded as a change in spatial relation, not only a change in number.



Seven — *sispí*

A small relational contact-step in the second-hand count

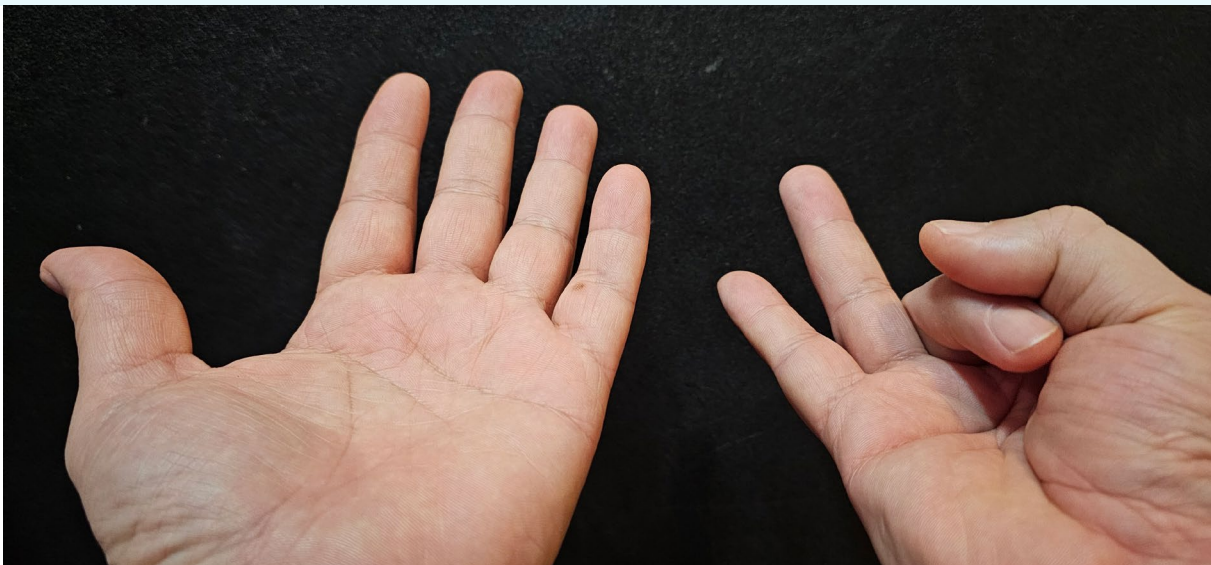
Element	Gloss	Function in this number
<i>sp</i> / <i>siþ</i>	strike with an object; struck with an object	directed contact through an acting point or instrument
diminutive reduplication	small-scale form	compresses the action into a small countable contact-step
-l	relational function	lays the action into the counting pattern

Seven is harder to see if one expects a simple static finger count. The form suggests a small relational contact-step within the second-hand layout. Rather than the major full reconfiguration of the hands, it is better understood as a small acted-on increment or contact that advances the count toward the fuller revealed pattern of eight.

Selected related words in the field

- ***spim*** — *strike something*. basic act family
- ***spłčep*** — *drum; hit a drum*. structured striking with an object
- ***spmintn*** — *something to hit with*. instrumental extension of the same field
- ***siþyšn*** — *one moccasin*. a related worked-over material family whose fuller bridge can be treated elsewhere

Worldview bridge: Seven remains one of the subtler numerals. The strongest current reading is a small functional contact-step in the count rather than a large global hand-switch. That interpretation fits the morphology securely.



Eight — heŋm, héʔeŋm

Outward emergence while a core remains held

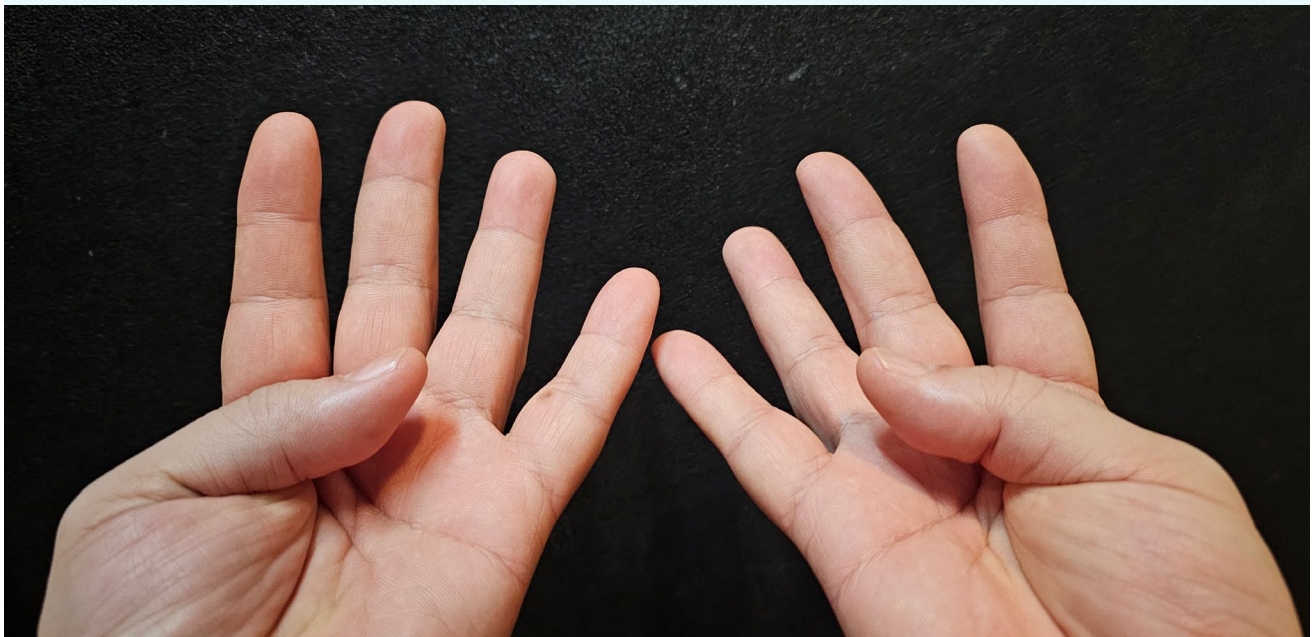
Element	Gloss	Function in this number
hŋ	outward reach; outwardly expressed stance	presence extended outward from an interior hold
heŋ	be in that expressed reach	the maintained state of outward projected presence
-n, -m	active and held relation	the reached state remains anchored rather than exhausted

Eight is grounded in the hand-configuration where the index fingers unfurl into presence while the thumbs remain held. The gesture is open and expressive, but not a total release. This gives eight a strikingly Salish profile: something from within reaches outward into relation while still remaining anchored to its source.

Selected related words in the field

- **hŋmwilš** — *became eight*. development into that expressed stance
- **hŋmishm** — *mourning dove*. a being whose held interior state reaches outward in sound

Worldview bridge: Eight is one of the clearest worldview numerals in the set because it combines outward emergence with retained interior hold rather than treating extension as pure release.



Nine — ǰǰńut

The small carried threshold-state before full closure

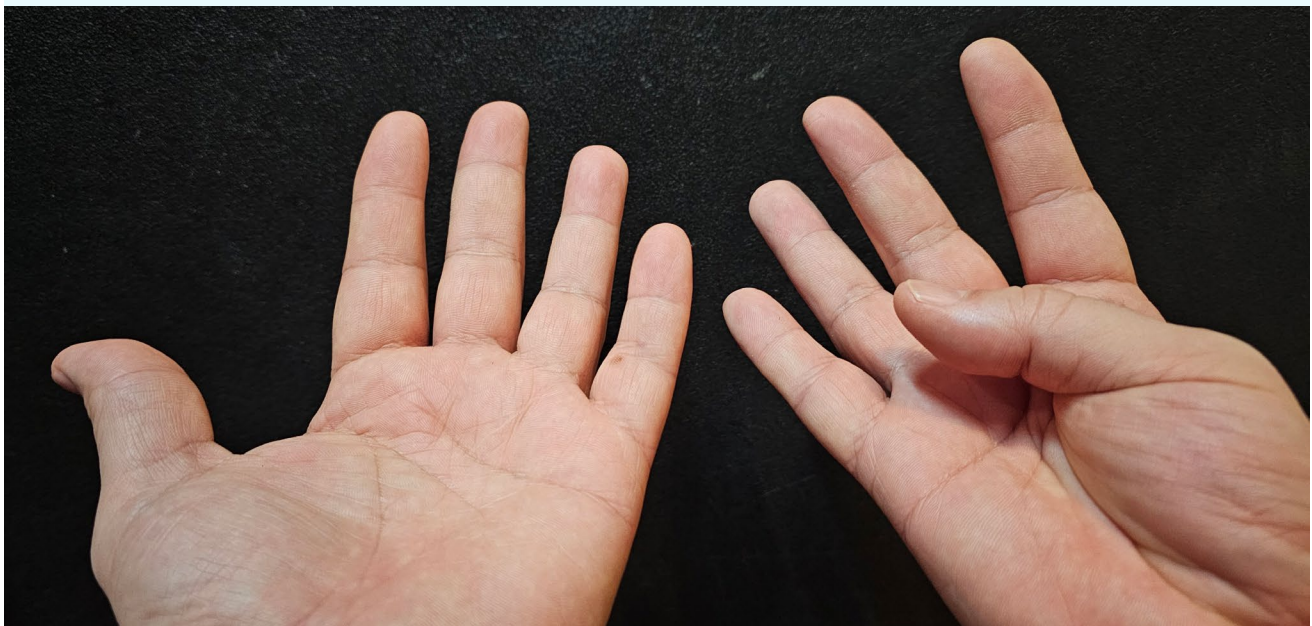
Element	Gloss	Function in this number
ǰń	directed threshold interface	an active edge-state pointing forward into further closure or emergence
diminutive reduplication	compressed small-scale threshold	makes the threshold a discrete countable unit
-ut	carried or inherent state	holds that threshold as a carried condition

Nine is not best understood as simple lack. It is the final open threshold before rollover into ten. The root names the directed threshold interface itself, while the numeral stem gives it a small carried state. In the counting system, nine is the fullest open set before closure into the complete projected whole of ten.

Selected related words in the field

- **sǰǰńć** — *robin*. an early arrival before full seasonal realization
- **ǰńǰńełp** — *field mint / peppermint*. a patterned edge-growth field that can help show threshold emergence rather than deficiency

Worldview bridge: This interpretation keeps the root positive and structurally rich: the threshold itself is meaningful. The sense of near-completion belongs especially to the numeral stem, not only to the bare root.



Ten — wupn, ʔupn

The full projection of all fingers open

Element	Gloss	Function in this number
wp	hair; stand/grow out	strand-like projection standing outward from a base
wup	inherently stands/grows out	the built-in design of such projecting growth
wupn	ten	the complete projected set of all fingers standing out

Ten is the full outward projection of both hands open. The family's imagery of hair, grass, fur, and projecting strands helps explain why the numeral works: all the fingers stand out like a complete field of lines. Ten is not only the count after nine. It is the fully shown, fully projected set.

Selected related words in the field

- **ʔs wpwpqnečst** — *all the fingers are extended out, both hands open.* the clearest visual support for the numeral
- **čwupn** — *ten people; tribal council.* ten as a complete social grouping
- **swpułx^w** — *grass, hay.* natural line-like outward projection
- **swpus / swpcin** — *beard; hairy face / hairy mouth-chin.* human body extensions in the same field

Worldview bridge: The move from projecting strands to ten fingers is one of the strongest examples in this document of a number word arising from a visual embodied field rather than an abstract counting label.



What this first deep dive demonstrates

First, the number words are usable public teaching material, but they are not shallow. Even the most familiar classroom topic opens into orientation, relation, and structural meaning when the root families are allowed to speak.

Second, the sequence shows that Salish counting can be grounded in the body: hand spread, midpoint, steadiness, offset placement, small relational adjustment, expressed reach, threshold, and full projection. This is worldview made visible through counting.

Third, the related words matter. Family, agreement, gathering, kinship, confidence, greeting formulas, geese in formation, drumming, doves, robins, grasses, and councils all show that number roots are not isolated labels. They belong to wider fields of orientation.

Finally, this document is only a first deep dive. Each family can be expanded further in later Extension Documents—numbers, greetings, colors, body words, kinship, seasons, plants, and common phrases—so that learners see how familiar vocabulary becomes a path into deeper Salish understanding.

This document is part of the Salish Root Project Extension Documents series: public-facing, readable, and deep enough to help learners feel the shape of the system before the technical framework is named outright.