



# Skunk, “Good,” and the Worldview Inside

ḲS Extension Document 004



A deep dive into **Ḳsteyyí**, **skunk** as a doorway into the deeper feel of **Ḳs**, effective fittingness, and Salish ways of recognizing how something is fully itself.

## Purpose

To use a familiar and surprising animal word to widen the understanding of **Ḳs** beyond simple English “good,” and to continue the worldview doorway opened through **x<sup>w</sup>yx<sup>w</sup>íyul** by showing how Salish can recognize a fitting, effective, outwardly expressed condition.

This document is for learners, teachers, and curious readers who want a usable, memorable doorway into Salish worldview through a single animal word, a small built-word breakdown, and familiar examples from the **Ḳs** family.

## Why begin with skunk?

The root word **Ḳs** is often translated as “good,” but its deeper feel is broader than simple approval or praise. It points toward a fitting, workable, well-configured condition — something standing in a way that works, comes together properly, or meets the world successfully. This helps explain why the family can extend into health, beauty, weather, taste, and other areas where what matters is not only whether something is liked, but whether it is functioning, fitting, or showing up well in relation.

Many people first meet **Ḳs** through familiar words like **Ḳes** or **Ḳest** and learn to think of the family simply as “good.” That is useful, but it can also keep the family smaller than it really is. A word like **Ḳsteyyí**, skunk, opens that doorway wider because it surprises the learner. If the same family that gives us familiar “good” words can also name skunk, then “good” here must be doing something deeper than simple approval, niceness, or praise.



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This makes skunk a strong entry point. It immediately raises the question: why would a skunk belong in this family? The answer is not that a skunk is “good” in an English moral sense. The answer is that this family often points to a condition of fittingness, effective configuration, or a condition that is fully working as it should in the world. A skunk may not be pleasant by human standards, but it is extremely good at being a skunk.

### A skunk in the grass

One time while fishing, I was walking through grass so tall it was about my height — around six feet tall. When I came out of the grass, there was a skunk right in front of me, looking straight at me. When we saw each other, I thought, “This is a cute little animal.” Then the skunk clarified the situation. Before I could even react, it lifted its tail and turned its rear end toward me. At that point I knew exactly what was coming. I quickly backed into the tall grass and went around it. I almost got sprayed.

### Salish telling of the scene

tnk<sup>w</sup>uw ɬu čnɪs qámeyíy šɪ u

čnɪs nx<sup>w</sup>sx<sup>w</sup>stestyíy í wswislš  
ɪcɪxi y t q<sup>w</sup>oyʔe ʃ<sup>w</sup>a ɬáqn sswislš  
šɪ y čn púpálm u  
t ʃxsteyíy u qɪ wčnwex<sup>w</sup>

hoy í šey u  
čn ɪaccɨ u čn nte u  
y ɬxɨesít ɬyʔe x<sup>w</sup>yx<sup>w</sup>íyut  
y í šey u nwisšlšm šɪ q<sup>w</sup>o čntxnupsrntm

y k<sup>w</sup>eínt u  
ɬɪ ɪs tmysten qs ɪsčenm u  
čn nwewpm šɪ ɪɬ nx<sup>w</sup>stestyíy u  
í šlčnten ɨyɬ nɪ u q<sup>w</sup>o pčntas.



**Story note:** ʃxsteyíy is the diminutive form, fitting the first moment of encountering the skunk as a little animal right in front of the speaker.



## A common first impression

Among many learners, the ending **-eyí** is often associated with appearing, pretending, or playing at being something. That public association is understandable because there are familiar words where that feel is strong. Because of that, **ǰsteyí** can first sound like “pretending to be good.” But if we stop there, we miss both the larger feel of the full word and the deeper sense of **ǰs**.

This document does not erase that association. Instead, it widens it. The goal is to help the reader feel that this word is built, that its parts matter, and that the full result points toward a strongly realized, outwardly expressed fitting state rather than a simple joke meaning like “pretending to be good.”

## How the word is built

Element	Working sense	What it contributes here
<b>ǰs</b>	<i>good; fitting; working as it should</i>	The grounding family sense: a condition that stands in a fitting, effective, or properly working way. This is not “good” mainly as praise or moral approval, but goodness as something coming together properly in relation and functioning as it should.
<b>-t</b>	<i>held as a state</i>	Carries that fittingness as a state or condition. It gives the form a more settled, state-like feel, so the goodness is not just a loose idea but something held, recognized, and standing in that condition.
<b>-ey</b>	<i>be the transforming</i>	Brings the state into transformation, showing, or taking shape. It helps move the form away from a static condition alone and toward something manifesting, emerging, or coming forth in a recognizable way.
<b>-ý</b>	<i>emphatic realization</i>	Intensifies the realization of that transforming state. It makes the condition stronger, more notable, more visibly or experientially present, so that what is taking shape is not faint or backgrounded but clearly brought out.



-ŝ	<i>outwardly expressed</i>	Carries the realized condition outward beyond interior containment. What has been taking form is now expressed, projected, or made outwardly present, so the condition is not merely inward or latent but visible in the world.
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Seen this way, **ǰsteyǰ** is better felt as something like **“a fitting state becoming strongly and outwardly realized”** than as **“pretending to be good.”** The point is not that the animal is acting nice, pleasant, or morally good by human standards. The point is that it is being recognized through the force, clarity, and outward expression of what it is. The skunk stands out as a creature whose condition is fully carried into visible effect. That gives a stronger feel not only for **ǰsteyǰ**, but also for the broader **ǰs** family grounded in fittingness, effectiveness, and workable condition.

## A better way to feel the word

The worldview shift here is important. English often pushes “good” toward approval: good means nice, desirable, or morally positive. The **ǰs** family often reaches somewhere else. It points toward something being fitting, effective, sound, working, agreeable, or properly configured in the way it meets the world.

That is why the skunk word matters. A skunk is not “good” because it is polite, cute, or convenient. It is good in the sense that it is fully and effectively itself. Its condition is unmistakable. Its presence is outward. Its way of being works exactly as it is meant to work. This gives the learner a more useful feel for both **ǰsteyǰ** and the broader family grounded in **ǰs**.

In the story, the diminutive form **ǰǰsteyǰ** adds another important layer. It reflects the first moment of encounter, when the animal is perceived as a little skunk right there in front of the speaker. The diminutive fits that immediate, close, momentary perception. It helps carry the same softened feel as the thought, “this is a cute little animal,” before the skunk’s warning display shifts the situation. In that way, the diminutive is not only about smallness. It helps show how the encounter is first experienced, before the animal becomes unmistakably and outwardly itself.



## Usable language from the **ǰs** family

Salish	Useful feel / translation
<b>ǰest sk<sup>w</sup>ek<sup>w</sup>st</b>	It is a good morning. Good morning.
<b>ǰest snyf<sup>k</sup>qi</b>	It is a good afternoon. Good afternoon.
<b>ǰest s<sup>cl</sup>ux<sup>w</sup></b>	It is a good evening. Good evening.
<b>ha y k<sup>w</sup> ǰes</b>	Are you well?
<b>ǰest ask<sup>w</sup>ul</b>	Good job. / That came together well.
<b>ha ǰsaqt</b>	Is it good weather?
<b>ha ǰse</b>	Does it taste good?
<b>ha k<sup>w</sup> nǰesls yet<sup>l</sup>ǰ<sup>w</sup>a</b>	Are you feeling good today?

These examples matter because they keep the family usable and grounded in everyday life. The same field that can name skunk also helps people speak about mornings, afternoons, evenings, wellness, taste, weather, feeling, and good work. That is part of the point: the family is not random, and its meanings are not just a list of separate English glosses. Across these forms, **ǰs** keeps pointing toward a fitting, workable, well-configured condition — something standing, appearing, or coming together in a way that works. The English translation shifts from “good” to “well,” “beautiful,” “taste good,” “good weather,” or “good job,” but the deeper pattern remains steady. This is part of the worldview shift: instead of treating each meaning as an isolated label, the language keeps drawing us back to one recognizable field of fittingness, effectiveness, and lived condition.



## A few companion words that widen the field

Form	General sense	Why it helps here
<b>ḡest</b>	<i>good, fine, beautiful</i>	Connects the skunk word back to the familiar public form many learners already know.
<b>ḡes</b>	<i>be well</i>	Shows goodness as an embodied, lived condition rather than abstract approval.
<b>ḡsasq̄t</b>	<i>the weather is good</i>	Shows that the family reaches naturally into conditions, not only people.
<b>ḡsałq / ḡse</b>	<i>it smells good / it tastes good</i>	Makes the family sensory and concrete; fittingness can be smelled or tasted.
<b>nḡesls</b>	<i>have good feelings; have a kind heart</i>	Shows that the family also reaches inward into feeling and relation.
<b>ḡsečstm</b>	<i>do something gently; handle with care</i>	Shows that this “goodness” can also shape behavior and way of acting.

## Research note

One important part of this work is learning to stay with a familiar form long enough to let it widen. A first impression is often useful, but it is rarely the end of the story. In many cases, a word first becomes familiar through a simple translation, a strong public association, or one especially memorable use. That first foothold matters. It gives the learner a way in. But if the work stops there, the word can remain smaller than it really is.

Here, the general association of **-eyf** with pretending or appearing helps open the question, but it does not close the meaning. That public feel is not wrong as a starting point. It points to something real in the way many speakers and learners recognize the shape of the form. But when the whole word is kept in view, and when **ḡs** remains the grounding connection, a broader picture starts to emerge. The skunk word begins to feel



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less like “pretending to be good” and more like a fitting condition carried into strong and outward realization.

That shift did not come from replacing one translation with another more clever one. It came from staying with the family longer, checking related forms, and asking what remained steady across different words and different settings. Familiar forms such as **ǰest**, **ǰes**, **ǰsałq**, **ǰse**, and **ǰsasǰt** help widen the field. They show that the family keeps returning to fittingness, effectiveness, workable condition, and how something stands or shows up in relation. Once that broader field becomes clearer, the skunk word can be heard inside it rather than outside it.

That kind of movement — from familiar translation, to surprise, to broader pattern — is part of the research method itself. A word family becomes clearer not only by collecting glosses, but by following repeated sound, repeated feel, repeated structural contribution, and repeated domains of use across many forms until a deeper coherence begins to show. Narrative also matters in this process. A lived story, like the skunk encounter, can reveal how a form behaves in sequence, stance, reaction, and changing perspective in ways that isolated word lists cannot.

So the method is not only to define a word, but to keep testing it: in related forms, in actual examples, in expanded usage, and in lived experience. Over time, that makes it possible to move from a useful first impression toward a deeper and more stable understanding of the family as a whole.

## Closing reflection

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If we stay only with the English gloss “good,” the **ǰs** family can feel small, flat, and overly familiar. But if we stay with the words themselves a little longer, the picture widens. Through **ǰsteyǰł**, learners can begin to feel that Salish is not just labeling whether something is liked, pleasant, or approved. It is often recognizing how a condition stands, how it meets the world, how it becomes visible in experience, and how fully it is carried out in its own form. That is why a skunk can become such a powerful doorway into this family: it interrupts the English reflex and makes space for another way of seeing. What emerges is not merely a broader translation of “good,” but a deeper recognition of fittingness, effectiveness, and outward realization across many parts of life. That is part of the worldview inside **ǰs**.



## Continue the ʔs journey

**This document is the first of a 3-part series on the ʔs family.**

This first piece uses ʔsteyíʔ, skunk, as a doorway into the broader feel of ʔs — not just “good” in an English sense, but fittingness, effectiveness, and a condition that is fully carried out in the world.

**Coming next in the series:**

- **Part 2:** feeling the family through ʔs, ʔes, and ʔas
- **Part 3:** everyday usage, forms, and expressions from the ʔs family

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This deeper-study level on Patreon is where Tachini shares engaging articles, research-journey documents, extended discussion pieces, and language notes on relevant and interesting topics grounded in Salish root word analysis.

The skunk story in this document opens a much larger discussion. In **Tachini U**, Tachini explores that story in more depth — including the developing wording choices, narrative framing, diminutive forms, field-response analysis, and the broader research journey inside the ʔs family.

Support at this level helps sustain the deeper learning and research work of the Salish Root Project while giving members a closer view into how the language opens over time.

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