SAHAPTIN ALPHABET SOUND CHART

introduction

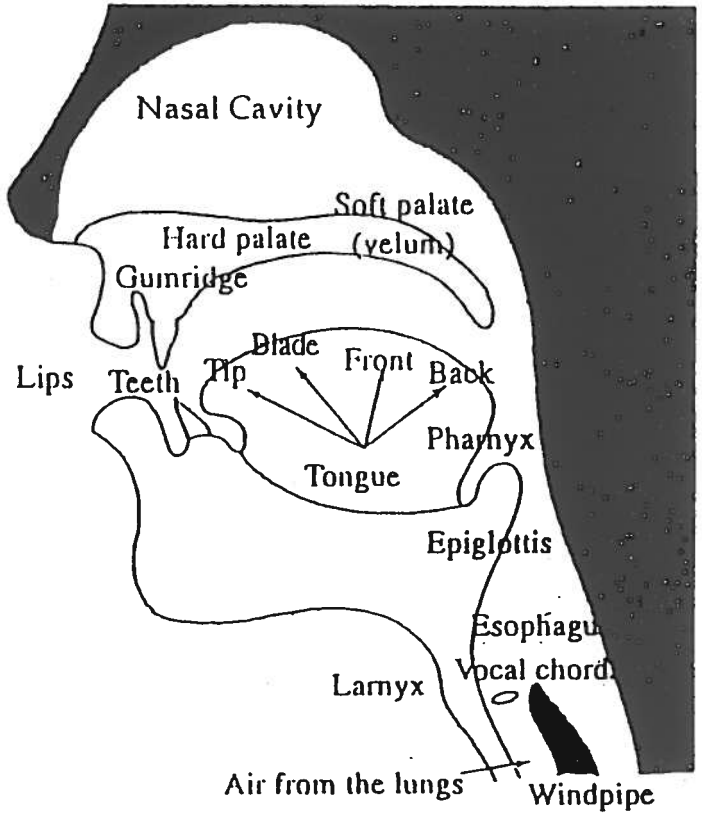
This sound chart is being introduced, to be used only as an on going reference for those just beginning to learn the language.

Learning to read and write the alphabet is just the beginning to the actual speaking of the language. Learning to speak the language will take time and dedication to become comfortable with knowing and understanding the language. In-depth language material will be available in class, for those who will continue the language learning process.

Much of the Sahaptin albhabet sounds are the same as English. The following letters represent those similar sounds:

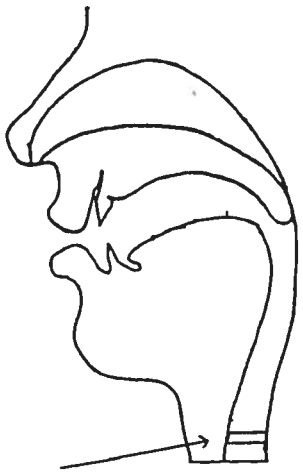
ch, h, k, l, m, n, p, s, sh, t, w, and y.

That's almost half of the Sahaptin alphabet, so you're about halfway there even before you start!



In the following, we will go through every letter of the alphabet and describe how to make the sound it represents. This side view will help you to identify the various parts of the sound tract that sounds will develop from.

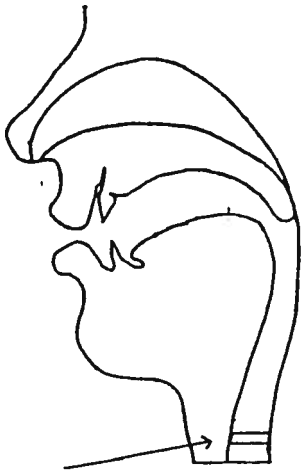
a



The "short a" is made by the tongue being slightly arched between the middle and lowest part of the mouth with short breath of air, (sounds like the sound "o" as in the English word "hot").

Examples:	~~apáp~~	~~hard~~
	ásham	wife
	am	husband
	wáshat	ride

aa



The "long aa" is made by the tongue being slightly arched between the front, back and lowest part of the mouth and held longer, (sounds like the "a" as in the English word, "father").

Examples:

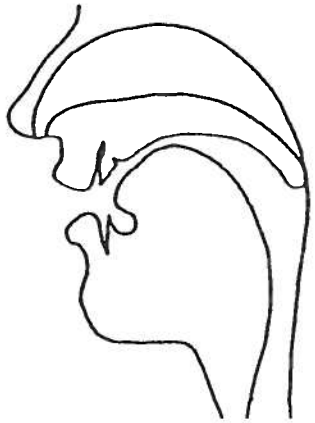
wáashat	worship-dance
káatnam	long
táaminwa	always

ch

The "ch" sound is made by tongue against gum ridge and roof of mouth, releasing the air softly, (sounds like the "ch" as in the English word "church").

Examples:	~~chuush~~ chiish	water
	chaw	no
	chchuu	be quiet

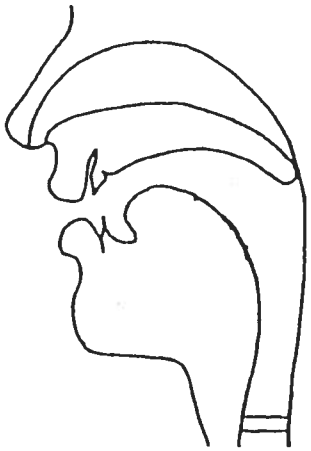
ch'



The "hard ch" sound i smade by the tongue against gum ridge and roof of the mouth with the throat made tense and vocal chords closed, (sounds like the "ch" with a catch in the throat).

Examples:	ch'm	sharp
	nch'í	bit, large
	~~ch'lch'l~~ chil ch'il	proud

h

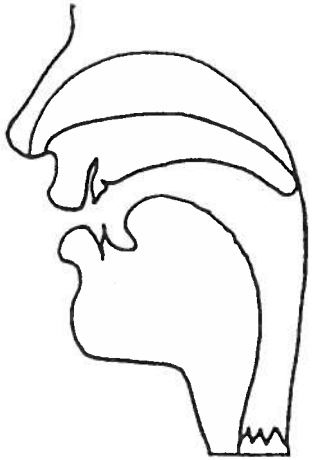


The "h" sound is made by the friction of air passing through the vocal chords, (sounds like the the "h" in the English word "house").

Examples:

háwit'ał	April
hulí	wind
(háhán) ha hán	root

i

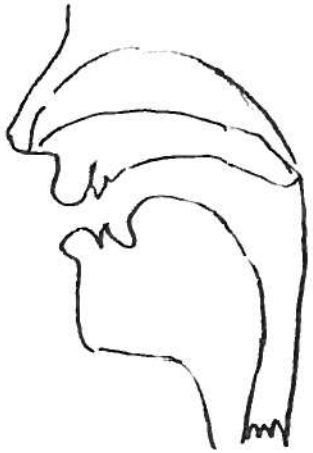


The "i" sound is made with the tongue raised toward the roof of the mouth and front of mouth with short breath of air, (sounds like the "i" in the English word "piece", but shorter).

Examples:	~~ími~~ ink	you
	ikks	little, small
	pipsh	bone

ɨ

Letter i
with a dash
in the middle

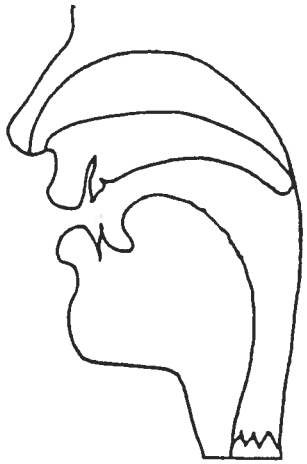


The "ɨ" sound is made with the tongue raised

Examples: ɨm
Chɨmti
Chɨm

mouth
new
sharp

ii

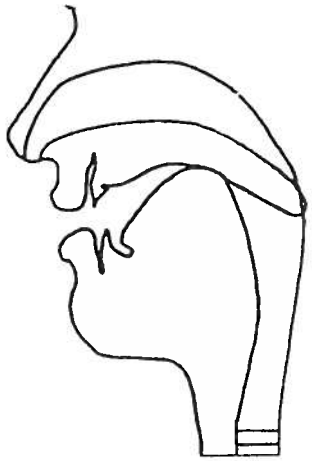


This vowel sound is made like "i", but held longer.

Examples:

ii	yes
~~niix~~ lakąmiin	~~good~~ flour soup
chishkiin	(in) Indian
tlpiip	~~language~~ wing dress

k



The "soft k" sound is made towards the back of the mouth, stopping the breath and then releasing it, (sounds like the "k" in the English word "sky").

Examples:

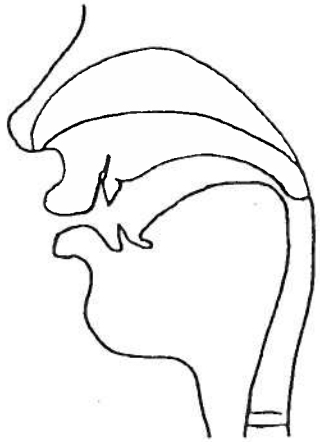
kápn kapin	digging stick
~~kalxw~~ kalux	blueback salmon
~~kkaasu~~ kyaasu	arrow
ku	and

k'

The "hard k' " sound is made toward back of mouth, stopping the breath and releasing it, with throat tense and vocal chords closed, (sounds like the "k" with catch in the throat).

Examples:	k'úsi	horse
	k'usik'úsi	dog
	~~k'aiwá~~ Kaywá	short

kw

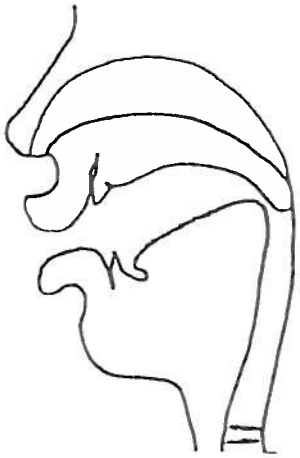


The "soft k" sound is produced by lips forming an "o" shape, with breath stopping at back of mouth at the piece of skin that dangles in the mouth, (sounds like the "k" sound with lips rounded).

Examples:

~~áikws~~ áykus	cottontail rabbit
~~shaikw~~	~~stars in a group~~
kwiyáam	true
~~kwíkw~~t	whistle
kwíkw	

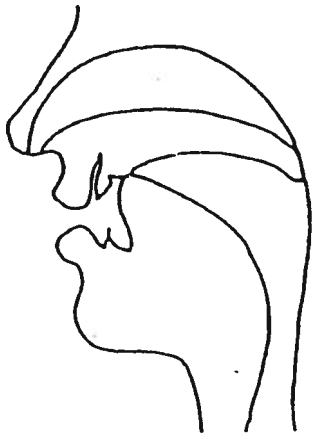
kw'



The "hard k" sound is produced by the lips forming an "o" shape with breath stopping at back of mouth at the piece of skin that dangles in the mouth, but done with the throat tense and vocal chords closed. The "kw" sound with catch in the throat.

Examples:	łkw'í	day
	kw'ayawí	cougar
	tamkw'i kw'i	hail stones

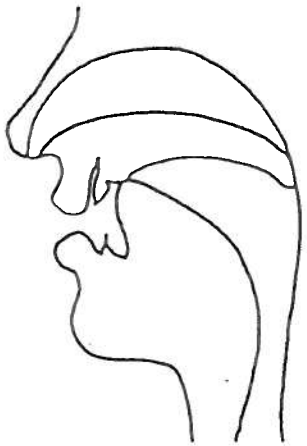
l



The "l" sound is made when the tongue touches the back of the teeth and forms a groove allowing air out both sides of the tongue, (sounds like the "l" in the English word "like").

Examples:	lákas	mouse
	latít	flower
	lulúu	smooth

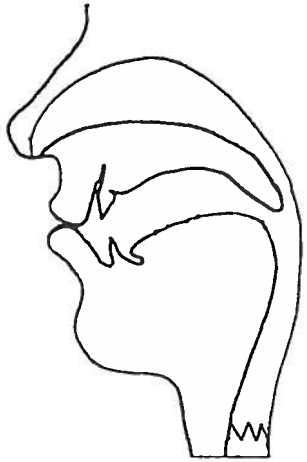
ł



The "barred l" is made when the tongue forms a groove allowing air out of both sides of tongue or just one side and made with a friction of hissing and hushing, (sound somewhat similar to "l" in English word "clash" in a rapid speech).

Examples:	~~łamtx~~ łamtix	head
	włq'ám łk'am	moccasin
	łałx łaałx	dirt

m



The "m" sound is made by the two lips coming together and touching and out through the nose, (sounds like the "m" in the English word "mouth").

Examples:	~~máamn~~ maamín	Appaloosa horse
	mimím	dove
	miyúux	chief, [illegible]

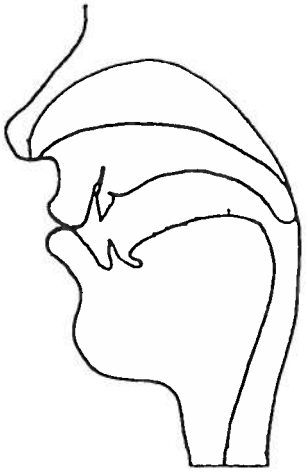
n

The "n" sound is produced when the tongue touches the back of teeth and the sound comes out through the nose, (sounds like the "n" in the English word "nice").

Examples:

nawát	belly
núsux̣	salmon
núshnu	nose

p



The "soft p" sound is made by lips together and stopping the outgoing breath, then releasing the air, (sounds like the "p" in the English word "spoon").

Examples:

papsh	fir tree
plash	white
~~napt~~ 7lipt	two (animates)

K

Examples: Maytski morning
ku heavy
twiskaka robin (bird)

K'

Examples K'äpp – shingles
K'ugwá' short (of stature) adj.

k'att steep (hill)
(precipitous)

K'

Ex
K'ayik colt, calf
K'uyt knee
K'ahpali buggard

Kw

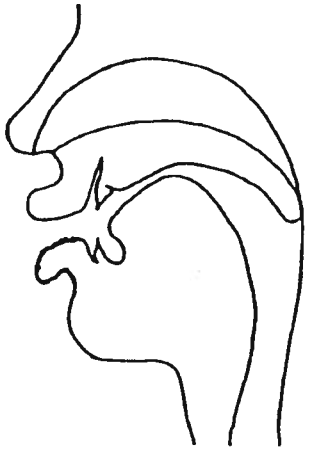
Ex:
v. Kwiikw (to) whistle
adj tkwaan dull (knife)
vt. tkwaympt (to) hunt wild animals
tkwaan

q′

The "hard q" sound is made in as far back of the mouth as the tongue can go,by stopping the air then releasing , with the throat tensed and vocal chords closed. The "q" sound made with a catch in the throat.

Examples:	q′áiq′ai	colt, calf
	q′uxwł	knee
	q′shpalí	buzzard

qw

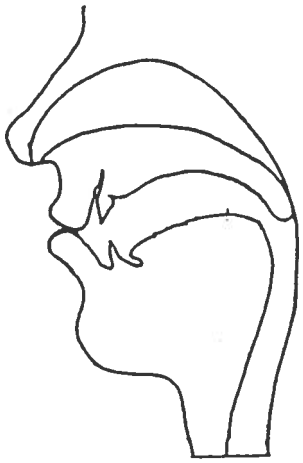


This sound is made like "q", except that the lips are rounded, producing a "w" sound.

Examples:

	~~qwalqwllá~~	turkey
	qwi	smelling good

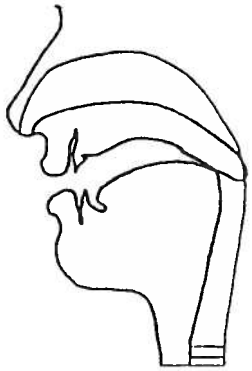
p'



The "hard p" sound is made by the lips together, stopping outgoing breath then releasing, with the throat made tense and vocal chords almost closed, (the "p" sound with a catch in the throat).

Examples:	p'íp'i	intestines
	~~p'iim~~ p'iyu	nighthawk
	p'ushtáy	hill

q k



The "q" sound is made in as far back of the mouth as the tongue can go, by stopping the air then releasing. There is no English word similar to this, closest to it would be the "k" sound in "key."

	maytaki	
Examples:	máicqi	morning
	qu ku	heavy
	~~wísqaqa~~	robin
	twiska ka	

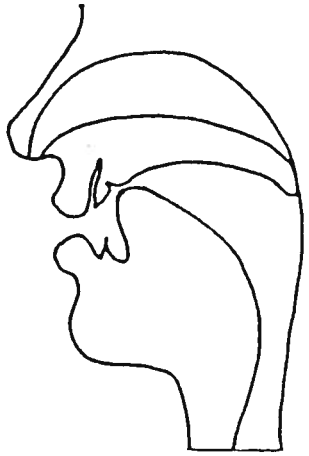
qw'

This sound is made like "qw", except that a glottal stop (catch in the throat) is made along with or right after the "qw" sound.

Examples:

nukw'aash ~~núqw'ash~~	throat
kwishxim ~~qw'shm~~	naughty
qw'áshqw'ash	crane
kwachkwash ~~qwltp~~ kwiltip	healthy, strong, active

s

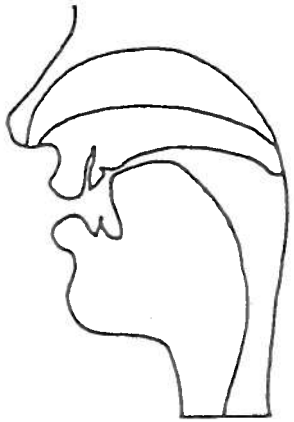


The "s" sound is made by the tongue touching the back of the teeth, allowing the air to pass through a narrow passage, (sounds like the "s" in the English word "sing").

Examples:

sawítk	Indian carrot
Spilyá	Coyote
~~asm~~ asim	eel

sh



The "sh" sound is made around the gum ridge and roof of the mouth woth a hissing or hushing sound, (sounds like the"sh" in the English word "show").

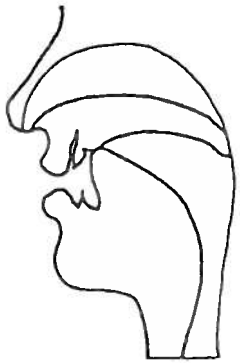
Examples:	sháxat	raspberry
shushaynsh	shusháimsh	steelhead
	shwa	forehead
shwiw	~~shuu~~	beard

t

The "t" sound is made with the tongue touching the back of the teeth, stopping the air briefly then releasing it, (sounds like the "t" in the English word "top").

	tap'ápsh	
Examples:	~~táp'ásh~~	pine tree
	táshtash	fish duck
tiskáy →	~~tiskái~~	skunk

t'

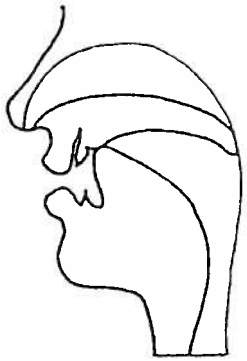


The "hard t" sound is made with the tongue touching the back of the teeth, stopping the air briefly then releasing it and done with the throat tensed and vocal chords closed. (The "t" sound made with a catch in the throat).

Examples:

t'íxt'ix	swallow (bird)
t'ixt'sh ~~t'xt'x~~	grasshopper
t'alpt	wampum

tł



The "tł" sound is made with the tongue touching the back of the teeth and forming a groove, allowing the air out sides of tongue and made with a hissing/hushing sound, (combination of the "t" and "l" sound).

Examples:

tłupt	jump
ktłaak	jagged
ptłx ptłak	bitter; pepper

tlʔ

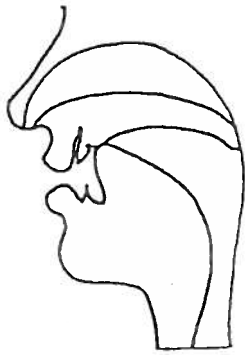
Examples:

N tl'ap throw away

conj. tl'anx to exclude

tlʔxtl'umx redwing blackbird

tɬ'

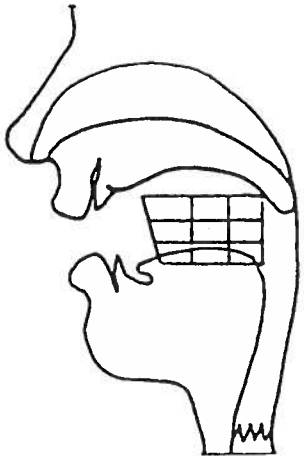


The "hard tɬ' " sound is made with the tongue touching the back of teeth and forming a groove. Allowing air out the sides of the tongue and made with a hissing/hushing sound, with the throat made tense and vocal chords closed, (same as the "tɬ" sound with a catch in the throat).

Examples:

tɬ'aaxw	all
tɬ'alk	blacktail deer
tɬ'tɬ'mx	redwing blackbird

u



The "u" sound is made with lips rounded with the tongue high and back of mouth, and of short duration, (sounds like "u" in the English word "pull").

Examples:

púsha	father's father, paternal grandfather
útpas	blanket, robe
mups	fawn

soft t-s

~~c~~ ts

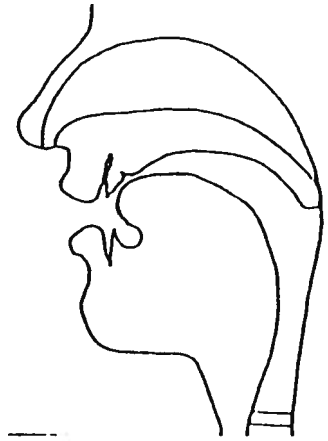
The "c" sound is made by the tip of the tongue against the back of the front teeth then releasing the air softly, (sounds like the "ts" in the English word "cats").

Examples:	~~máiccqi~~ maytski	morning
	músmus~~a~~ tsxin	cattle
	~~cqat~~	~~quiet, still~~

move

c' (ts') copy

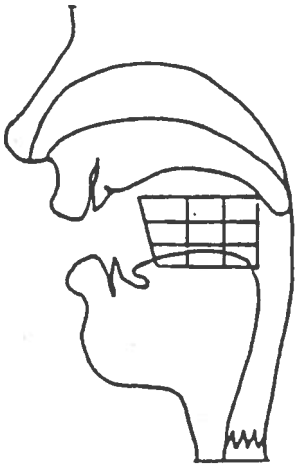
hard t-s



The "hard c' " sound is made by the tip of the tongue against the back of the front teeth then releasing the air with the throat being tense and vocal chords closed, (sounds like "c" with a catch in the throat).

Examples:	c'aa ts'a	near
	c'i ts'i	sweet
	sc'at stat	dark
ts'unips	~~c'únips~~	oak tree

uu

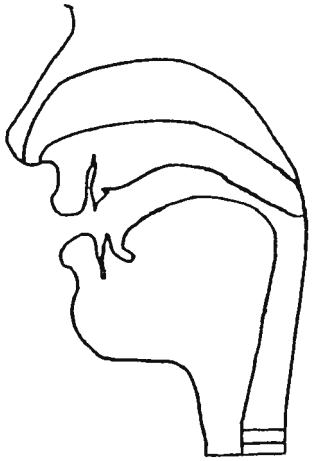


This vowel sound is made like "u", but held longer.

Examples:

puush	juniper
ẋ p'uus	cat
ttuush	some

w

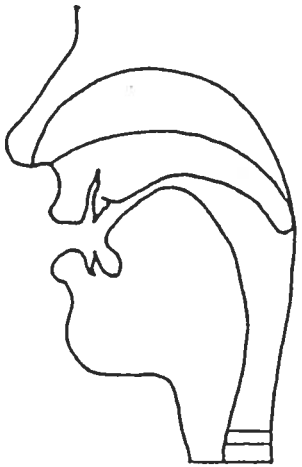


The "w" sound is made with the lips rounded and vocal chords vibrating, (sounds like the "w" as in the English word "wool").

Examples:

wawá	mosquito
watám	lake
wilalík	jackrabbit

X



from + "o.f"

The "x" sound is made when the back of the tongue touches the the back part of the roof of the mouth allowing a friction noise, (no sound in English, closest would be thte "ch" in the name, "Bach").

Examples:	~~miyáwa~~x	~~bear~~
	luxlúx	shining
n. mts'uxli	~~xaslú~~	~~star~~ tea pot, vessel with opening that guides flow of liquid
	~~naxsh~~	one
	~~xa~~lish	wolf
	~~xatx~~at	duck

XW

The "xw" sound is made by rounding the lips, with the back of the tongue touching the back part of the roof of the mouth, allowing a friction noise, (the "x" sound pronounced with the lips rounded).

Examples:	xwtatai	pillow
	c'xwilí	tipi
	xwáami	above, high
	xwashxwai	bluejay
	xwayamá	golden eagle

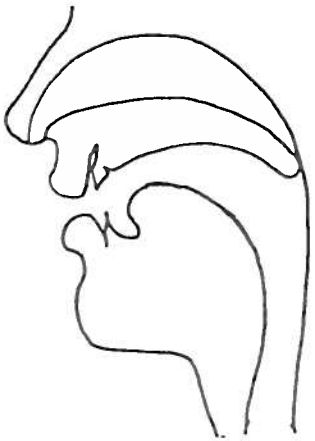
X

Examples Miyauax — headman, chief
Xaasha — star
Naxsh — (number) one
Xalish — wolf
Xalxat — duck

XW

Examples
Xwayama golden eagle
Xwashxway blue jay
Xwünni wayup high

y



The "y" sound is made by the mouth in same position for the vowel "i", then moving to position needed for complete sound of "y", (sounds like "y" as in the English word "yesterday").

Examples:	yápash	grease, fat
	yáamash	mule deer
	wiyapnít	bull elk

ʼ

The "ʼ" sound is used to modify sounds. It is done when the throat is made tense and the vocal cjords closed. Closing and opening the lid to the esophagus, known as the "glottal stop."

Examples:	ʼaʼa	crow
	puʼúuł	blind
ayʔay	~~ach'ai~~	magpie

ˈ

The stress mark ˈ over letters indicates where a person will need to put more stress into the letter sound

pánta —
pantá —