

**Literature Review of  
Immersion Programs –  
Dr. Brock Pitawankwat**

## II - Literature Review

### Why does Anishinaabemowin Matter? Fluent speakers' Perspectives

What is lost when Anishinaabeg no longer speak Anishinaabemowin? In 1973, Wilfred Pelletier of Wikwemikong expressed what his first language means to him and how language influences and shapes its speakers.<sup>2</sup>

*So I've learned a lot about myself and my people and about whites too, just from knowing and using two languages. A language, any language, grows out of the experience of the people who use it. So English (I suppose, like all Western European languages) is a language of organization, of instruction, of explanation, of classification, of analysis, of calculation, and above all, of argument. It is designed to deal with fragments – details and events. But it's a two-way street: language is shaped by the people who use it. That's obvious. But people are shaped by the language they use. That isn't so obvious. (205)*

Pelletier also compared Anishinaabemowin with the English that he learned in school.

*When I first moved into white society I became very much aware of the use of pronouns. I had been speaking English all my life but never realized how these pronouns – I, he, she, it, we they – separated everybody and everything so completely and even inferred a basic disagreement. Or so it seemed to me. In my own language there is no distinction made between 'he' and 'she.' 'We' is used instead of 'I.' So when I say 'we,' as an Indian in my own community, I'm talking about me. I'm talking about me in the sense of that school of fish or that flock of sandpipers, even though the context of that particular time or instance may not actually include every last person in the community. Also I'm talking out of my experience of life as a flow, an uninterrupted river of happenings, rather than out of my experience of life as a series of isolated events. All that is just there, implicitly in the language. If I want to talk about events, I'll find myself just automatically using English, or I want to talk about organization or technology or business. English is a better language for taking things apart. Ojibway is best for putting things together. Maybe that's it. If I get to feeling hostile and I want to argue about something – have a word fight – I'll revert to English. Just do it. Never think about it. And you'll hear that switch happening all over the place if you listen for it. You'll hear it in pubs or bars, usually, when people have been drinking.*

*I find it difficult to explain, but what I think those little differences in language mean is that the people using them relate in a different way. I think that I have a fairly good command of the English language, but I still can't make it say what I mean, particularly when I'm trying to say something about Indian behaviour or the Indian view of life. I get to the point where I just can't go any*

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<sup>2</sup> Pelletier, Wilfred and Ted Poole. 1973. *No Foreign Land – The Biography of a North American Indian*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 204-205.

*further in English and all I can say is, "It's in the language." And that's not so much because the actual words are different, but because I can't use English without getting into explaining. It makes me explain – puts me on a whole explanation trip. When I use Ojibway, I just talk. The meaning is just there – in the words, yes, but also in the silences, the spaces between the words – and there is a whole sense in which the listener is free to take what he pleases from those words, create his own 'explanation.' The words themselves don't persuade any more than music persuades. (204-205)*

Shirley Williams, a fluent speaker and teacher of Anishinaabemowin, explains why she believes the language must be taught.<sup>3</sup> Originally from Wikwemikong, she describes a turning point in her own life in 1974 when an Elder stood up in a meeting on youth suicide with the challenge, "Those of you who know the language and culture, what are you doing about it?" Since 1986, Williams has taught the language at Trent University and developed language materials.

*The spiritual represents our feelings. Many words describe feelings, and Ojibway is known as the 'feeling language.' It is like a sing-song when it is spoken. At gatherings of the same speakers, one can hear a lot of laughter... The spiritual focus is on listening, which is important if a learner is to hear what is said. The emotional focus is on word-speaking. In order to reproduce these sounds, we first have to hear them. Yet hearing is more than hearing. We pick up other cues from people as we listen and become aware. These cues can influence our spirit as we listen to the feeling within the words. The physical focus is on word-writing. Since Nishinaabemwin has become a written language, a physical aspect of learning the language is writing it. The physical activity of writing reinforces what we are thinking. The mental focus is on reading the new written words of Nishinaabemwin. (81)*

For Williams, language revitalization has a healing effect. "Thus our words, or language, are medicine to one's spirit. As the language is put back together, the language and the learner become whole, for the teachings and values are reflected in Nishinaabemwin words themselves." (81-82)

Another advocate for Anishinaabemowin revitalization is scholar Roger Spielmann who became a proficient Ojibwemowin speaker as an adult. Spielmann, although not Anishinaabe himself, learned the language from fluent mother-tongue speakers and believes it is key to the cultural survival of Anishinaabeg.

*Aboriginal peoples need their languages to preserve thoughts and ideas that can only best be expressed in their languages of origin. Equally important, language provides direct contact with the wisdom and teaching of the elders. If a person has his or her language and identity, it can go a long way in preventing assimilation into another culture and in preserving tradition-specific ways of relating to others, be they human or other-than-human persons. The philosophy, world view, spirituality, and culture-specific ways of*

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<sup>3</sup> Pheasant-Williams, Shirley. 2003. "The Development of Ojibway Language Materials." *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 27 (1): 79-83.

*thinking and doing things of a people are built right into the very structure of their language. It is a route to seeing history and an alternative way of reconstructing a more accurate and representative picture of history. (238-239)*

#### **Academic Achievement with Cultural Capability**

A common concern among educators and parents remains current. Will children who take culturally enriched programs suffer academically? Many studies have concluded that the opposite is true: academic performance improves when learning occurs in a culturally-appropriate environment. Mary Hermes bases her analysis on culture-based curriculum at the Lac Courtes Oreilles (Anishinaabe) tribal school and notes that there is a recognized dichotomy between the academic and cultural course work.<sup>4</sup> Teachers and administrators struggle with how to deal with the tension between academics and culture in the tribal school (390-391) and students pick up on this tension (391). One consequence of this dichotomy is that a trade-off is apparent where a student who pursues academic goals will be sacrificing cultural ones. "...I am suggesting that it is the relationships between teacher/students/curriculum/identity within the class that encourages and invites students to continually re-create who they are in that class, not the specific content." (395)

Hermes identifies three negative consequences to the academic/cultural split: students perceive academic success as assimilative because it comes at the expense of cultural development; it fails to account for Ojibwe contributions to academic knowledge; and it makes teaching Ojibwe culture in a classroom impossible (396). In order to overcome this false and harmful cultural/intellectual dichotomy, Hermes advises explicitly pointing out how Ojibwe ways of knowing are intellectual and academic (396) as well as bringing culture/community into academics (396-397).

#### **Teaching Culture Through Language Immersion**

Hermes advocates teaching culture through language based on her decade-long research on cultural education in Ojibwe communities in the USA.<sup>5</sup> She warns that attempting to slot in Ojibwe language and culture into a regular school curriculum actually distorts both language and culture (47-49). Instead, she singles out the Ishpaming School's new direction following the Elders' advice that "teaching *through* the Ojibwe language (instead of *about* Ojibwe culture) would be a more effective approach." (44) However, Hermes stresses that this is an ideal and does

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<sup>4</sup> Hermes, Mary. 2000. "The Scientific Method, Nintendo, and Eagle Feathers: Rethinking the Meaning of "Culture-Based" Curriculum at an Ojibwe Tribal School." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 13 (4): 387-400.

<sup>5</sup> Hermes, Mary. 2005. "Ma'lingan is just a Misspelling of the Word Wolf": A Case for Teaching Culture through Language." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 36 (1): 43-56.

not advocate throwing out cultural curriculum as there is proof that it raises self-confidence and self-esteem among students while reducing dropout (46).

Hermes quotes one of her participants who explains the difference between speaking Ojibwe and thinking Ojibwe.

*I think the elders are misheard when they say, 'If we have language, we are going to have culture.' It is the thought that connects the language that is so important. We are currently teaching Ojibwe language through English thought. We say ma'iingan is equal to wolf, but it is not. They [the students] think ma'iingan is just a misspelling of the word wolf. (50)*

Another teacher worried "that without cultural context, even fluent Ojibwe could be appropriated to reflect an English way of thinking." (53) Another example is children pluralizing the Ojibwe words they learn in school with "s" as done in English (50).

Hermes pitches language immersion. "Linking language revitalization and culture poses a tremendous opportunity for revitalizing the culture-based education movement, whereas allowing two disconnected movements to develop (culture-based and immersion approaches) could have devastating effects for Indigenous languages." (52) Finally, she concludes with an appeal for sharing the language to ensure its survival.

*Our languages must be shared in order to survive. All Ojibwe people should have the opportunity to learn the Ojibwe language. Language makes students feel a part of, rather than apart from, their culture. Language has a generative, creative power that is currently missing from the teaching of culture in schools. (53)*

Anishinaabe scholars are urging our communities to make culture and language programming a priority. Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows (Cape Croker FN) hopes a new generation of bicultural and bilingual Indigenous legal warriors can bridge Aboriginal and Canadian law. Borrows stresses that First Nations themselves must maintain and revitalize their cultural knowledge and laws (26-27). He acknowledges that there will be risks of "unjust appropriation" when sharing Aboriginal cultural knowledge (25). What happens when Anishinaabe culture and language curriculum are developed and taught in public schools?<sup>6</sup> How can Anishinaabeg protect their intellectual and spiritual property?

**Basil Johnston – how children learn language.**

Children, especially young children, learn languages differently than adults who are acquiring a second or third language. Children learn the language orally. In an extraordinary essay that answers the "so what?" question on Anishinaabemowin, Basil Johnston (Cape Croker FN) describes how children acquire language.<sup>7</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> Borrows, John. 2002. *Recovering Canada – The Resurgence of Indigenous Law*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 24-27.

<sup>7</sup> Johnston, Basil. 1999. "How do we Learn Language? What do we Learn?" In *Talking on the Page - Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts: Papers given at the Thirty-second Annual*

essay begins by posing the question of how children can acquire language without "trained teachers ... formal lessons ... classrooms ... texts ... homework ... grammar ... linguistics." (43) Johnston argues convincingly for analyzing language to understand the Anishinaabe worldview.

*Much work and study remains to be done in order to understand Anishinaubae ideas and institutions. Until that study is done, the Anishinaubae peoples and their teachers cannot fully understand the philosophy or the philosophic basis for their institutions, cannot fully transmit them to their children. In the mean time, the Anishinaubae people must rely on European texts and authorities for information and interpretation concerning their heritage, and continue to teach their heritage in terms of canoe construction, food preparation, clothing styles and subsistence patterns as if Anishinaubae institutions either did not exist or, if they did exist, they had neither merit nor validity. (51)*

Johnston precedes fellow Anishinaabemowin scholar Mary Hermes by several years in making the case for teaching culture through language.

*In the study of language, much more than the ability to utter words or to express simple wants and sentiments is expected. The end of language is to glean some understanding of the transcendental, the abstract, the world, life, being, human nature, and laws both physical and human-inspired – as embodied in literature. Only in the context of literature does language make sense; and it is only in the ambit of literature that language studies, courses and exercises find relevance. (51)*

Johnston also encourages all language learners. "One of the advantages of our tribe's language is that a speaker need not memorize all the words or have heard them all. He may need to memorize no more than a few hundred prefixes, suffixes, verbs and nouns, and yet he will have a vocabulary numbering in the thousands." (48)

**Case Study: Mille Lacs Band Ojibwe Language Revitalization Program**

Janine Ja no's Bowen, a Seneca language instructor, conducted a study of the development of the Mille Lacs Band language program which was funded by casino money. Reasons for the language revitalization project included the fear expressed by one Elder that, "Without our language we are not Ojibwe people. We are only descendants of Ojibwe people." (3) The language's decline correlated with social problems ranging from family break-up to increased gang activity (4). It was hoped that teaching the language would instill a common value system as explained by the former tribal Commissioner of Education.

*By teaching the language we are building a foundation for a lifetime of productive citizenship...Ojibwe values are inextricably linked to the language. These values, such as caring for the environment, healing the body and mind*

*together, and treating all creation with respect, are taught most effectively when they are taught in Ojibwe. (4)*

The tribe made the push for teaching the language in the 1970s when they established the Nay Ah Shing school but, despite a tribal law mandating the graduation of fluent Ojibwe speakers, struggled to do so until the casino money arrived in the 1990s (5-7). An Elders Advisory Board (EAB) oversaw the project and organized the teaching of the language in the school. They demanded oral fluency as the priority in order to encourage ceremonial participation by the students (8). The focus was then on conversation as the most effective way to teach the language (9). This required full immersion and it was found that it worked best to have another fluent adult in the room with the teacher so their dialogue could role model to the students how to speak (10, 12). Resources were shifted to the pre-school and primary levels (10). Other initiatives included distance learning through television for high school students who attended off-reservation high schools (11).

Success was defined as students speaking the language independently outside of school (11-12). Land-based and creative teaching methods included music and comic books (12). Challenges include a disconnect between learning the language and the associated values/worldview (13). Complaints included that the students still had "white thoughts" (14). An Elder, Jim Clark, explains.

*They are still thinking the white way. Now we have to get them to think the Ojibwe way to make them truly fluent. If you don't push that thought into their brains, they're talking the language [Ojibwe] and they're thinking something else [American]. (14)*

The superintendent concurs.

*One must be clear about the relationship between words and thoughts. Values and heritage lie in thought not words. Therefore, when developing your curriculum, you must remember to match it with the thought process you are trying to preserve. (14)*

Other challenges were the difficulty of finding fluent teachers (15) to work in the schools and the sandwich generation dilemma where parents do not speak it at home (16). Survival would come first and the parents rarely had time to study the language independently. The school had success with a Parent Committee formed in 2001 which encouraged participation in "Program activities such as sugar-bushing, ricing, feasts, and parent nights, their interest in the Program grew." (16)

#### Anishinaabe Values

Anishinaabe scholar Bill Asikinack (Walpole Island FN) emphasizes the importance of stories for teaching us about values.<sup>8</sup> Asikinack shares two mythological beings of the Anishinaabe world: Ma-ma-qui-sha-wok and Windigo. The Ma-ma-qui-sha-wok

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<sup>8</sup> Asikinack, William. 1992. "Anishinaabe (Ojibway) Legends through Anishinaabe Eyes." In *The First Ones: Readings in Indian/Native Studies*, ed. David Reed Miller. 1st Edition ed. Piapot Indian Reserve: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, 156-159.

or Little People in the Rocks were powerful beings who needed to be appeased with tobacco offerings by Anishinabek (158). He explains Windigo "in the language of the Anishinabe refers to a person who is engrossed in him/her self, by being self-engrossed is selfish to excessive extremes, and by being selfish will become monstrous in respect to the norms of a sharing society." (157) Both Ma-ma-qui-sha-wok and Windigo stories taught Anishinabe values of generosity towards and respect for others.

Basil Johnston describes how the Windigo narrative continues to teach Anishinaabeg to think critically about consumption, greed and selfishness.<sup>9</sup> One interesting addition is the section that concludes the book titled "The Modern Weendigoes." (235-237)

*Actually, the Weendigoes did not die out or disappear; they have only been assimilated and reincarnated as corporations, conglomerates, and multinationals. They've even taken on new names, acquired polished manners, and renounced their cravings for raw human flesh in return for more refined viands. But their cupidity is no less insatiable than that of their ancestors.*  
(235)

The rest of the section singles out the logging industry and closes with the hopeful thought, "Perhaps, as in the past, some champion, some manitou, will fell them, as Nana'b'oozoo did in the past." (237)

Borrows also advises an environmental ethic as Anishinaabeg revitalize their cultural heritage. Anishinaabeg must "incorporate Indigenous ideologies and perspectives into their actions, including ideas about the federalism we should enjoy with the earth."<sup>10</sup> He notes that Anishinaabeg could teach Canadians a great deal about the environment and how to develop sustainably (39).

#### **Anishinaabeg and the Land**

Winona LaDuke explores the interconnection between relationships to land and culture for Indigenous peoples.<sup>11</sup> She equates biological diversity with cultural and linguistic diversity. "There is a direct relationship between the loss of cultural diversity and the loss of biodiversity. Wherever Indigenous peoples still remain, there is also a corresponding enclave of biodiversity." (1) She tells readers that Indigenous people consider the flora, fauna, and the land itself as our relatives "the ones who came before and taught us how to live." (2)

*There is a direct link in our community between the loss of biodiversity – the loss of animal and plant life – and the loss of the material and cultural wealth*

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<sup>9</sup> Johnston, Basil. 2001. *The Manitou: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway*. St. Paul, Minn: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

<sup>10</sup> Borrows, John. 2002. *Recovering Canada – The Resurgence of Indigenous Law*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 140.

<sup>11</sup> LaDuke, Winona. 1999. *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

*of the White Earth people. But we have resisted and are restoring...the White Earth Land Recovery Project works to restore the forests, recover the land, and restore our traditional forest culture. (5)*

LaDuke draws inspiration from Mohawk language revitalization efforts including the 1979 survival school and the 1985 immersion program (14). The Akwesasne Freedom School uses the Mohawk Thanksgiving Address and the Ceremonial Cycle for its curriculum.

LaDuke's chapter, "White Earth – A Lifeway in the Forest," depicts the traditional lifestyle and how it was impacted by invading industry. LaDuke frequently includes Anishinaabe words along with their English translations: manoomin, gahwahbahbahnikag, biiboan, ziigwan, biidaabin, oshkidibikad, makakoon,... (115) She describes the gradual land dispossession of the Anishinaabeg of White Earth and its culmination with the "Relocation Act of the 1950s, under which tribal members (and native peoples across the country) were offered one-way bus tickets to major urban areas." (121) Efforts to restore a traditional economy on this devastated landscape was met with a racist backlash (123). The White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP) includes language as a component. "The project works aggressively to preserve Native languages and culture, restore traditional seed stocks, and reinstate self-determination and self-reliance." (126-127)

*Finally at the center of WELRP's cultural work is language. While most North American Indigenous languages are expected to be extinct by 2050, the Anishinaabeg language is one of approximately five expected to survive. That is because there are an estimated 50,000 speakers, most of whom live the process of reaffirming the traditional way of life and its ceremony, dances, songs, and prayers to which the elders refer. (130)*

*Since 1995, the WELRP has worked on a range of language restoration projects. The WELRP's Wadiswaan Project is an early-childhood language revitalization program in one of the tribal schools. The WELRP also organizes adult/family language-immersion retreats and takes children out of school into the woods, the sugarbush, the corn fields, and the heart of cultural practice. All of this is a slow process, but in the WELRP philosophy it is thought that these children will be leading our community in 20 or 30 years and that we need to ensure that they know something about who they are, why we are here, and how we talk to the Creator. Renewal is a central part of each generation's responsibility. (130)*

The book's tenth and final chapter, "The Seventh Generation" (195-200), tells the prophecy of the Seventh Fire when "Anishinaabeg people retrace their steps to find what was left by the trail." (198) She cites Eddie Benton Benai who explains that there are two paths from which people must choose to follow.

*...the road to technology and the other road to Spiritualism. They [elders] feel that the road of technology represents a continuation of headlong rush to technological development. This is the road...that has led to modern society, to a damaged and seared earth...The [other] road represents the slower path that Traditional Native people have traveled and are now seeking again. The Earth is not scorched on this trail. The grass is still growing here. (Benton Benai as cited by LaDuke 198)*

LaDuke describes the environmental work of Walt Bresette from Red Cliff reservation (Anishinaabe) who recently passed away (198-200). She urges people to follow his life's work. "On a community level, we must support local self-reliance and the recovery of Indigenous systems of knowledge, jurisdiction, practice, and governance." (200)

#### **Anishinaabe Nationhood**

Robert A. Fairbanks connects language to nationhood and identity. He warns that "the loss of the Ojibwe language is by far the greatest threat to Anishinaabe sovereignty."<sup>12</sup> (21) Fairbanks criticizes the government for deliberately targeting the Ojibwe language because of its political and social power (21). He notes the widespread decline of speakers and how few born after the late 1960s speak the Ojibwe language (21)

*Other than cultural nostalgia, why is the Ojibwe language important? It is important because it provides political distinctiveness and permits identification of the Anishinaabe as a distinct people...Simply put, if the Ojibwe language is not a living language, the Anishinaabe are no longer a distinctive people: and there is no inherent Anishinaabe sovereignty. (22)*

Fairbanks believes that "the Anishinaabe must make the revitalization of the Ojibwe language their highest priority." (23)

*Moreover, the Anishinaabe must take responsibility for language revival into their own hands. They must insist that their reservation governments provide the resources for effective language programs. Waiting...will only hasten the extinguishment of Anishinaabe sovereignty. (23)*

He cites Cecil King who has warned that the language could disappear within a generation (23). Fairbanks concludes that "Anishinaabe should examine their language situation carefully and act accordingly. Their very existence as a distinct, sovereign people depends on it." (23)

#### **Anishinaabe Language Warriors**

Another Anishinaabe language warrior, Henry Flocken, has written hopefully of the revitalizing potential despite the severe language erosion of his White Earth reservation which has been reduced to 1% fluency (11).<sup>13</sup> He wonders whether the

<sup>12</sup> Fairbanks, Robert A. 1996. "Anishinaabe Sovereignty and the Ojibwe Language." *Oshkaabewis Native Journal* 3 (1): 21-4.

<sup>13</sup> Flocken, Henry. 1996. "Warriors for Gidanishinaabemowininaan." *Oshkaabewis Native Journal* 3 (1): 11-20.

loss of dialects could help standardize the language and even recommends abandoning his own southern dialect in favour of the northern one (12). He notes that younger speakers are showing the shift in mentality, phonology, and syntax towards English (12).

Flocken is also forthright about his own limited languages skills but dismisses the notion that this should prevent him from actively pursuing RLS:

*Of course I have not earned the right to talk about any of this because I am not fluent. But then again, I do have the right to fight for our language. It is still my language, and my fight to get healthy again. Do not feel bad if you were not born with the language – that is not your fault. Anyone can fight for the language and should fight for the language even if they know only two or three words. (12)*

He repeats this theme later in the essay.

*You do not have to be a fluent speaker to fight for the language. Every time you speak in front of a group always say something for our language. If you know only one Ojibwe word, use it often. Every time you say one word into the air strengthens the language. (18-19)*

Flocken recommends developing language skills by taping up words around the house and listening to audio language material in the background (19). In the community, he suggests a designated table for speakers at public events as well as introducing the language into media such as newspapers and radio. Flocken also advises running immersion camps. (19) He also recommends recording elders to preserve personal stories and local history that can be shared with other learners and the schools (20).

Rebuilding healthy communities and individuals requires reconnecting with “earth, language, land, and our ceremonies. This is how we find our center and our balance. Our language is not lost – we are.” (13) Flocken writes the “school is the battle front” for RLS but admits that “in our schools students have a dismal chance of learning Ojibwemowin.” (13) He praises the language teachers but lists problems with curriculum, teacher training, and lack of support (14-15). He recommends a school-wide approach and describes ways that school administrators can foster language learning (17-18). Flocken praises the efforts of the Mille Lacs tribal school which boasts 5 language teachers, fluent teacher aides, a music program in the language, an elders council, and a full-time director (18).

However, Flocken notes that even the limited symbolic usage of the language in schools is having a positive effect on students’ self-esteem (14). He advocates immersion methods and stresses that it is popular with students (15-16). He believes the success of a language program is measured according to the amount spoken by the students (16). He warns that language learners “will not speak if they fear criticism...New speakers such as myself have a real fear of being told they are saying it wrong.” (16)

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Flocken recommends the communicative approach to language teaching which relies "on contextual clues while teaching additional concepts of the setting –using Ojibwe all the while." (16-17) "This involves using the language, not talking about the language, in problem solving situations." (16)

*As a nation we need to join forces. We need to network and share our successes...We need warriors to fight for our language. Maybe we can start an Ojibwe language warrior society. We need to join forces and draw up battle plans. We need armies across the entire Ojibwe nation...I challenge every individual to pick up the fight. You do not have to be fluent to fight. We need your help. (20)*

#### Building Alliances for Anishinaabemowin Revitalization: Colleges and Universities

University partnerships are an important source for curriculum development and teacher training. Sagamok First Nation and professors at Laurentian University have worked together on education programs at the primary school level in Sagamok. The University of Ottawa has recently agreed on a partnership with Walpole Island First Nation to accredit its adult immersion program with joint Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees in Anishinaabemowin Immersion. The University of Minnesota (Duluth) is the home of an Anishinaabemowin immersion language nest. Many universities offer language revitalization programming and Indigenous students are often highly motivated to support "language program development."<sup>14</sup>

Shirley Williams has worked as a language professor at Trent University and has extensive experience developing curriculum materials as well. Williams identifies and teaches five dialectical regions Manitoulin Central, South-Eastern, Chippewa, Plains, & Northern to encourage respect for each (81). Williams describes how linguist Chuck Fiero developed the orthography to accommodate the 7 vowel sounds (80).

*Today we have come to the point where the language must be written; it must be recorded in order to preserve it for the children. Many Elders did not want the language written, whereas others have said it should be. The modern learners of the language agreed with these Elders; they wanted it written because they were accustomed to having everything written. Writing is a way of learning for them, and so written language became a tool for making learning earlier. (79-80)*

Williams notes the 1996 conference "Finding a Common Writing System" and describes subsequent efforts by the Native Language Instructors program at Lakehead University to teach the standardized writing system (82). She describes her current textbook project but it is admittedly mostly noun-based (82-83). Some of the other projects she describes are an interactive CD-Rom with hockey terms, crossword puzzles, and flashcards (83). "All these recreative activities reflect the revitalization of Ojibway Nishinaabemwin thought and language, the rebirth of our

<sup>14</sup> Mihesuah, Devon Abbott. 2005. *So You Want to Write About American Indians? A Guide for Writers, Students, and Scholars*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 46.

cultural identity as a people. Putting these into practice is equivalent to regaining our voice, recovering ourselves, reclaiming our landscape, and reimagining our place in the cosmos." (83)

Mindy Morgan shares her work with Anishinaabemowin instructor Helen Roy at Michigan State University to describe challenges that large universities face in regards to ILR.<sup>15</sup> She credits universities with offering classes, sharing archival material, and training teachers (97) but acknowledges that more must be done. The two problems she identifies are "creating language-immersive environments and including Indigenous communities in program development." (97) Morgan believes that universities must play a role in RLS.

*Anishinaabemowin is an integral and vital part of this knowledge base. The language remains at the heart of Indigenous communities and therefore should be at the heart of academic programs designed to serve those communities. The inclusion of Indigenous languages in university programs, however, threatens to divorce them from the community contexts that sustain them...[therefore] the programs developed under its auspices must take care to adhere to local concerns and needs. This includes accepting new visions for the university classroom – visions that include fewer chalkboards and more dance arenas. (102)*

Morgan explains that "successful Indigenous language programs must focus on not only creating speakers but also actively bringing the language back into community life." (97) The community's role is crucial in any language revitalization effort and facilitating community involvement in universities is difficult (98). She offers the Waadookodaading Immersion School in Hawyard, Wisconsin as an ideal model for immersion programming for children (98). Morgan points out that language erosion does not occur uniformly and that Michigan has been hard-hit (99).

Roy and Morgan have sought new learning environments by creating language opportunities in the classroom and without nearby communities. Examples include a Quiz Bowl with fluent judges as well as immersion feasts at a local community centre (100). The latter is less scripted and allows for "natural conversation over a wide variety of subjects." (100) Yet another event is the Native American Dance Showcase (100). Morgan considers the event successful at demonstrating "the continuing vitality of the Ojibwe language...[and] linked the language to other cultural activities...the events are about creating a spirit of community as well as language learning." (101) Morgan writes that these language events have eclipsed the university classes to "become the central component to the program through their ability to link the university to the surrounding Ojibwe communities, to create immersion environments, and to support intergenerational language learning. The events also create new and alternative spaces for learning

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<sup>15</sup> Morgan, Mindy J. 2005. "Redefining the Ojibwe Classroom: Indigenous Language Programs within Large Research Universities." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 36 (1): 96-103.

and using Ojibwe that are necessary given the local speaking environment.” (101). Looking to the future, Morgan recommends expanding the above events as well as transfer options for MSU students to further their language training (101).

**Case Study: Blackfeet Immersion School**

Darrell Kipp describes Blackfeet efforts to establish an immersion school on their reservation in Montana.<sup>16</sup> His report is a shared dialogue with other Indigenous language program practitioners. Of the participants, 8 of the 12 are Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe mostly but 2 Potawatami too). The summary is concise:

*Keep in mind that the language is the key. There is nothing else. There is no other priority. There are no other issues. There is no reason to defend your motives, your actions, or your vision. You do not defend yourself, your own language fluency, or lack of fluency. You do it. Action is the key. Native children who are actively speaking the language are your only result. (1)*

*So, in developing a program to revitalize the language: (1) never ask permission, never beg to save the language. Never; (2) never debate the issues. Never; (3) be very action oriented – just act; (4) show, don't tell; (5) use your language as your curriculum – botany, geography, political science, philosophy, history are all embedded in the language. (1)*

Kipp advises against setting up bilingual programs and instead insists on full immersion in the target language (3). Kipp stresses that lack of resources are obstacles that will always be there but provides a list of rules for building a language program in an Indigenous community:

**Rule 1: Never Ask Permission. Never Beg to Save the Language.**

In this section, Kipp describes the apathy and occasional hostility of community members to the language work (5). Kipp's advice is to let people know how they can assist but never beg for assistance (5).

*We are all relearners...Education, for Native Americans, was a journey to lead us away from who we really are. It's no wonder that none of us who had a college education knew our language. It's obvious that in order to get through the educational system, to make it to college, to get through college, to be recognized for our work, we had to leave many things behind. Language relearning is a journey back home. But this time you have the tools. I am sure that many people are suspicious of your motivations...We are an oppressed people. We have been so colonized that we can now, easily, perpetuate it ourselves. (5)*

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<sup>16</sup> Kipp, Darrell R., Piegan Institute, and Cut-Bank Language Immersion School. 2000. Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned From Native Language Activists Developing their own Tribal Language Programs. Browning, MT: Piegan Institute's Cut-Bank Language Immersion School.

Kipp also recommends focusing on language revitalization rather than cultural revitalization because it is too difficult to define or measure progress of "culture".

*Who we are comes from the language, not from the Indian culture. What is culture? That Indian culture could be construed as beat-up old pickup trucks, buckskin jackets, and powwows. Sure, in fact, that is contemporary Indian culture today – we are living it. We are not using the word culture. Culture is too vague, too consuming, and too volatile. Never use the word. It's meaningless. It's debatable, a loaded word. Use the word language. The culture comes from the language. (6)*

Save your strength by focussing on those who do want to learn. "You do not ask permission to use your language, to work with it, to revitalize it...You don't change the entire community. You save your strength; you find the ones who want it." (6)

In 1994, after meeting a Kanaka Maoli delegation at a bilingual education conference, the Blackfeet learned from the Hawaiian example (8-9)

**Rule 2: Don't Debate the Issues**

Debating saps time and energy so never do it (10).

**Rule 3: Be Very Action-Oriented: Just Act**

Kipp describes how the land was acquired for the school and how it was built (11-12).

**Rule 4: Show, Don't Tell**

Their school demonstrates respect for the language by paying teachers 10% more than nearby schools. Standards are high for children and its dedication is to producing fluent speakers (13). "Many of us who help found and develop these schools will never be fluent in our languages. But because of our work, these babies will become fluent." (14) Kipp notes that language opens many doors in the community (14)

*There is no place for cultural hitchhikers. The people who want to hitchhike on your culture want rites, and rights, but not the responsibility. Cultural vampires who want the best things in the language and won't study the language are fools. You have no time for them. (14)*

The challenge of foundation grants to build up an endowment is discussed (15-16) and Kipp warns of frequent rejection. However, perseverance is crucial...parents contribute by paying tuition so people value the program (18-19). Students whose parents cannot afford this cost are supported regardless (19) Parents can also volunteer in the school to cover this cost...Kipp describes the effort required to bring in the best speakers. "When you start the program, when you set up the language, do it right. That sets the basis of how your children will speak." (17)

**Nuts and Bolts of Immersion Programming**

Kipp stresses the importance of planning and contingency planning (20). The school is run by a small board of directors but they do not operate according to Robert's Rules and are wary of establishing committees that distract from the language work (20). "You don't reform, you abandon bad systems." (23) The school

emphasizes unstructured play that is outdoors and physically active (24). The school's rules are:

- No pouting allowed
- No whining
- No yelling
- No tattling
- No snitching

"Not one of these provides problem-solving strategies. They create dependency strategies." (24) Kipp advocates following a "sacred schedule" rather than the linear busy time schedule (24-25). Teaching children the "language rules, the language standards, and the old language philosophies...so that the children can be inventive in the traditional way" ensures lexical renewal. (25) The language must be publicly promoted despite refusing to debate its value (28).

Starting off is a challenge and it will take at least a few years to develop an immersion program (29). However, acting quickly is crucial as the situation will only continue to deteriorate. Start with 5 or 6 students who are around 4 years old and then add a new group each year at this age (30). Begin with basic necessary phrases and practice them constantly (29). TPR is also recommended (30). Begin by teaching for comprehension (30-31). Have audio in the background constantly especially with small children (31). Stage 2 "The Silent Stage" and Stage 3 "The Speaking Stage? Soon follow. Surround the children with fluent speakers (34-35) whose only task is to speak the language in their presence. Staff are held to a high standard and are warned that they will no longer be welcome if they are "belligerent, uncooperative, if you bombard us with your excuses for living a disorganized life." (35) Anything that interferes with the children learning the language is unacceptable (36).

Kipp also stresses financial transparency and independence from tribal government (37). He advises hiring a professional bookkeeper (37). He warns that Indian politicians will seek to control the program and destabilize it (37). He raises the example of the Boarding School syndrome behaviours and sets this school apart. "Public humiliation, public squealing, public gatekeeping, and mean encounters are never to be allowed. All our attempts to speak the language, conduct business in the language, organize in the language are a part of our attempts to change community dynamics" (37). Kipp also warns against exploiting the program and the children for tokenism (38).

Kipp advises preparing a transition management team and holds up the ideal of students themselves eventually take over as teachers and administrators (39). He describes the immersion school as a "sanctuary" for the language (40). The work is hard but it is not a sacrifice because the process itself is enriching (41).

### **III – Findings and Recommendations**

In Part I of this report, we see clearly that survey respondents overwhelmingly support Anishinaabemowin revitalization in their communities. Language learning needs to occur throughout the community, including at home, at daycare and at school. Community leaders need to act to develop institutions and programs for teaching Anishinaabemowin. In Part II, this report surveyed the language programming literature to identify some best practices for language revitalization. Here in Part III, the preceding sections inform the following findings and recommendations on how to develop language programming for the Anishinaabeg of Manidoo Mnissing.

The survey results indicated very high levels of support for Anishinaabemowin initiatives in our communities. 95% of respondents believe it very important or somewhat important to learn to speak Ojibwe and to provide language teaching in Ojibwe. 90% want their children and grandchildren to learn traditional lifeskills and to speak, read, and write in Ojibwe.

The survey indicated that revitalization work is urgent as fewer than one in five (18%) respondents learned Anishinaabemowin as their first language. Fewer than one in twelve (8%) use Anishinaabemowin most often at home and only one in eight (13%) respondents consider themselves to be fluent.

Parents have expressed their support for a full immersion school although concerns persist that their children's education will not be compromised. Over half of the respondents with children at home, 137 out of 251, agreed that they would wish for their children to attend a full Ojibwe immersion school

The most effective programs are aimed at young children and begin with a single cohort of learners. Then, a new year's curriculum is added to support the initial group of learners as they advance while new students take their place. This incremental approach as it gives administrators time to develop each year of the program and also eases the transition to a larger learning facility. The initial cohort can begin in a single classroom and gradually expand as enrolment climbs. The ideal stage to begin would be toddlers between 18 months and 30 months. When those children are too old for that program, a new one would be created for children from 30 months to 47 months. And so on...

Here is a recommended timeline:

**2013-2014** Establish an immersion toddler program for 18 months to 30 months. Begin with 15 children and at least four staff (three staff are required plus an alternate for curriculum development and as a teaching substitute). At least two of the staff must be fluent with ideally all four being either fluent or advanced speakers.

**2014-2015** Add a new immersion program for children 30 months to 4 years. This new program receives the 15 children who have advanced from the previous year. At least 3 new staff must be hired to

**2015-2016** Add a new immersion program for children who are 5 years old (Pre-Kindergarten)

**2016-2017** Add a new kindergarten immersion year for 6 year old children who have completed the immersion preschool and pre-kindergarten.

If children are able to complete four full years of immersion programming, when all they hear and speak in their program is Anishinaabemowin, with no English used at all, then they will become fluent Anishinaabemowin speakers by the time they are ready for first grade. A new generation of fluent speakers begins!

<b>Year of launch</b>	<b>Age of children in cohort</b>	<b>Ratio of employees to children.</b>	<b>Maximum number of children in group</b>
<b>2013-2014</b>	18 months - 30 months	1 to 5	15
<b>2014-2015</b>	More than 30 months - 47 months	1 to 8	16
<b>2015-2016</b>	4 years	1 to 8	16
<b>2016-2017</b>	5 years (pre-K)	1 to 12	24
<b>2017-2018</b>	6 years (Kindergarten)	1 to 15	30
<b>2018-2019</b>	7 years (Grade 1)	1 to 15	30
<b>2019-2020</b>	8 years (Grade 2)	1 to 15	30
<b>2020-2021</b>	9 years (Grade 3)	1 to 15	30

This program can be expanded incrementally through all primary and secondary grades and beyond. A toddler who begins the program at 24 months will be able to advance each year to a new level and by the time she is old enough for Grade One will have received four years of language immersion. It is anticipated that the success of this program will lead parents and other community members to continue to expand the program to the early primary grades as well.

There needs to be at least two fluent teachers in every classroom to model proper speech. Students should be exposed to as many different speakers as possible in order to expand their language development. It is important to be respectful of different dialects and avoid unnecessary conflicts over the "right" way to say something. In all languages, there are often many different ways to express the same concept. However, hiring local language teachers should be a consideration to ensure that local dialects of Manitoulin continue to be spoken.

The curriculum should be based on the Anishinaabe calendar and include as much land-based activity as possible. Children can learn language by helping out at or observing the sugar camp. Many of the survey respondents emphasized the importance of learning traditional skills such as drumming, fishing, gardening, hunting, and trapping. Outdoor activities and unstructured play should be emphasized throughout all language programs.

As pointed out by many experts, including Johnston, Kipp, and others in Part III of this report, there is little or no need for literacy training. For children aged 18 months to 6 years, the focus should be oral communication in Anishinaabemowin. However, the materials that teachers will use in the classroom should be standardized with the double-vowel orthography. At a minimum, curriculum developers and teachers must be able to read and write with the double-vowel system even if the learners themselves will not until they begin the primary grades.

For the early immersion years, parents should be encouraged to attend with their children whenever possible. All parents should receive take-home packages in order to support their children's language acquisition at home as well as at school. Evening classes should be made available as well for parents and other adult learners to keep pace with what children are learning in their immersion program. This will also help satisfy the broader communities' demands for more language materials and programs.

It is crucial to continue to learn from the experiences of others. There are local immersion programs at Sagamok and Wikwemikong that should be visited. Collaborative relationships should be encouraged in terms of curriculum and language materials development, teacher training, etc. As mentioned in this report, there are also similar programs in the United States that can be models for the development of future language programs for Manidoo Mníssing.

In summary, this report recommends establishing an Anishinaabemowin immersion pre-school and then expanding the program in one year increments. Incremental expansion could provide this initial cohort of children who begin the program in the Fall of 2013 with language immersion opportunities at each stage as they advance from daycare, to preschool, primary, secondary and beyond.