



Indigenous Peoples
Talk Language Revitalization

**Teacher Resource: From Interviews to
Action**

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Executive Summary

This resource is a supplement to the Indigenous language podcast interviews conducted for the Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF) project: Voices from the Land: Indigenous Peoples Talk Language Revitalization.

Each interview is an informative and interesting discussion with someone who has deep ties to their Indigenous language. A few of these interviews are about exploring the importance and value of Indigenous languages from a cultural perspective (Zebedee Nungak, Harriet St. Pierre, and Mike Mitchell). The rest of the interviews are with people engaged in teaching an Indigenous language, where they describe the program they are involved in, approaches they use, and insights they have gathered over many years of doing this important work. Originally intended as two separate categories of interviews, that divide was abandoned almost immediately as it became apparent that there was much intersection between the pedagogical and non-pedagogical discussions. Thus, you will find in all of the podcasts valuable and deep insights as to the power and importance of Indigenous languages, and important guidance, recommendations, and resources for promoting and revitalizing them.

The interviews crossed a broad number of topics. These include pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, language assessment, language course planning, grammar, culture in the language classroom, building community language learning programs, and student language learning strategies. Originally, it was thought to limit the number of topics per interview to ensure depth of coverage on those topics. However, interviews were very rich in insights and wider ranging in coverage of ‘what works’ and limiting interviewees to prescribed topics did not work in practice. For this reason, every interview traverses a range of topics. Attempts have been made to highlight what topics occur more prominently in which interview, but every episode offers insights worth hearing.

This document is intended to help guide engagement on the topics and provide a ready handy reference for each interview. We recommend both listening to an episode and reading this Resource. While we endeavoured to ask of each participant for recommendations, we found that there were far more threads of best practices and things-to-consider running throughout each interview than those that could be neatly distilled under a heading of ‘recommendations.’ For this reason, while we have recommendations, best practices, and resources listed here for the different interviews, listeners to the podcast episodes will find that there is more detail and nuance to interviewees’ experiences and insights than are reflected here. We highly recommend listening to the interviewees themselves, who have graciously taken time out of their busy schedules and their very critical work to share some of what they have learned in their efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages.

We at the Legacy of Hope Foundation would also like to extend our thanks and gratitude for what was shared with us. It was repeated in virtually every interview that one cannot separate language from culture. We also heard that our languages are medicine, and that learning our languages is a healing journey. It was also reinforced across interviews that Indigenous languages need a lot more financial resources, legislation, and time – time in-class, time in-community learning beyond one-two hours a week, or evening classes, or weekends. With an understanding that what was shared with us was a gift, and that revitalizing our languages is a journey of healing that benefits from more time and more resources, we are happy to share this gift with you. We hope that listeners (and readers) find something interesting, relevant, and moving across these episodes. We most certainly did. Please visit this website to access the podcasts: <https://voicesfromtheland.podbean.com/>

● ● Overview of the Project

● ● ● ● ● ● The LHF is a national, Indigenous-led, charitable organization that has been working to promote healing and Reconciliation in Canada for more than 20 years. The LHF has a mission and mandate to promote education and awareness about the impacts from Residential and Day School Systems, the Sixties Scoop, and other colonial acts of oppression that have caused trauma to seven generations of Indigenous Peoples. By educating people about this history of harm, and ongoing racism Indigenous Peoples continue to experience, we try to promote empathy and understanding, respectful dialogue, and meaningful action to address the existing social and economic disparities facing Indigenous Peoples today. These intentions serve a broader goal to promote hope, healing and Reconciliation among all Canadians. Indigenous Peoples' language loss has a direct link back to what they experienced while at Residential and Day Schools and the Sixties Scoop where children were forced to learn English and punished for speaking their mother tongue. The loss of original languages has had severe impacts on Indigenous health, well-being, spirituality, culture, education and so much more.

The LHF views the revitalization of Indigenous languages as an essential part of healing and Reconciliation in Canada. There are many people, organizations, communities, collaborators and Nations who are working on revitalizing their original languages. This is necessary and exciting work! As part of our mission and mandate, the LHF has sought to amplify these discussions with this project and to make them available to a broader audience.

The overarching goal of this project was to produce a podcast series for an intended audience of Indigenous language teachers, informing them of effective practices across Canada. We also wanted to speak with Indigenous language speakers who are not necessarily teachers, to gain insights into the values, uses, and impact of being able to communicate in one's Traditional Indigenous language. Eight interviews were sought for pedagogical purposes. Three interviews were sought to explicitly explore the cultural value of language.

The intention was to speak with 'experts' located in Canada working with Indigenous languages in Canada. While the word 'expert' can conjure up images of letters beside one's name (and we did interview some doctors), our use of the word was more to describe people who have deep knowledge and practical experience who were able to speak to different aspects of Indigenous language learning. We were also aware of a vibrant sharing community of Indigenous language revitalization across Turtle Island (North America) and 'across the pond.' Our initial aim in this project was to try and stay within the borders of Canada in terms of whom we interviewed. However, what quickly became apparent was that this cross-collaboration of learning and sharing about Indigenous language revitalization was happening prolifically both across Turtle Island and across the pond. Indigenous communities span borders and so, while everyone we interviewed was doing language work in Canada, several of them were drawing on, or pointing to, work done on Indigenous languages outside of Canadian borders.

Reviewing literature on the subject of Indigenous language revitalization showed that while Indigenous communities were dealing with unique contexts for language revitalization, they also shared common features of challenge. It was clear in the literature that many people doing important work in language revitalization were already engaged in connecting with and learning from other language communities. They would adapt the other communities' techniques and approaches for the language to their own contexts, using the shared characteristics (typically language structure and a high value on cultural revitalization as part of the pedagogical approach) as a basis for bringing in these external approaches. In many cases, this seemed to result in a fast-track to successful language revitalization. However, some of these resources were produced for academic consumption and could be difficult to access (both in terms

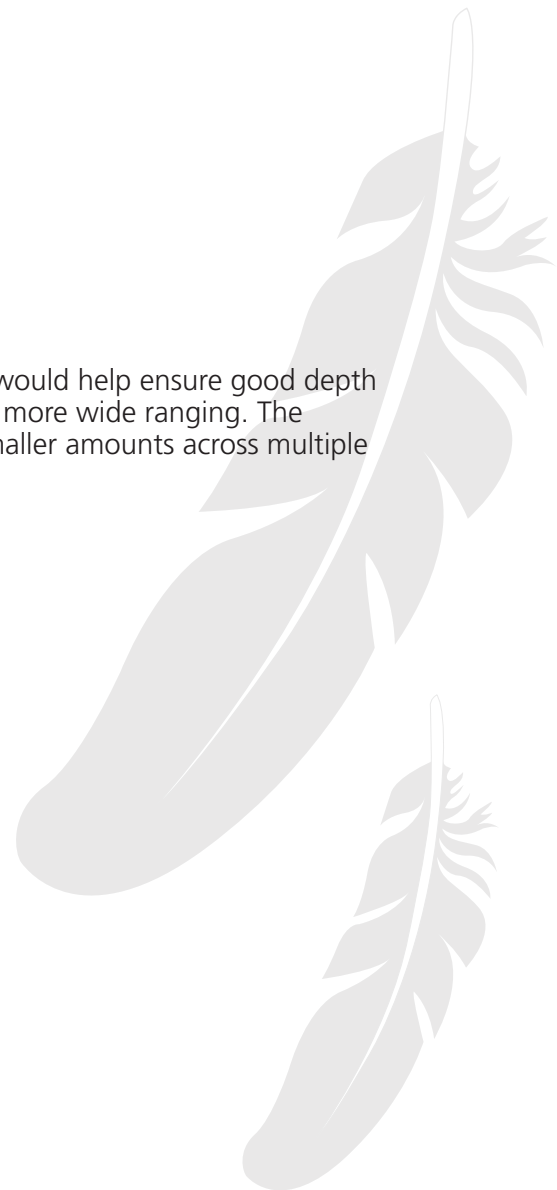
of complex language and in terms of needing access to academic journals). Thus, it seemed to the LHF that a natural way to tread this similar ground would be with actual conversations that could be shared with the ease of listening to a discussion at the table.

Orientation of the Work

To increase the value of our interviews, we used Literature Reviews to narrow the focus of interviews to certain topics that had a good chance of having increased relevance across communities and contexts. By tackling Indigenous language revitalization for Indigenous language teachers through a variety of relevant topics, it would be possible to speak to the broader issue of Indigenous language revitalization while providing specific practices and recommendations that could be considered and potentially pursued by interested listeners. The topics used for the interviews included the following:

- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary acquisition
- Language assessment
- Language course planning
- Grammar
- Culture in the language classroom
- Building community language learning programs
- And student language learning strategies

It was initially thought that by using these topics as discussion focuses, it would help ensure good depth of discussion for interviews. However, in practice, interviews tended to be more wide ranging. The listener will likely find that a particular topic can be found in larger and smaller amounts across multiple interviews.



Interviews – Summaries, Best Practices, and Recommendations



• **Non-Pedagogical**

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Zebedee Nungak - Inuit

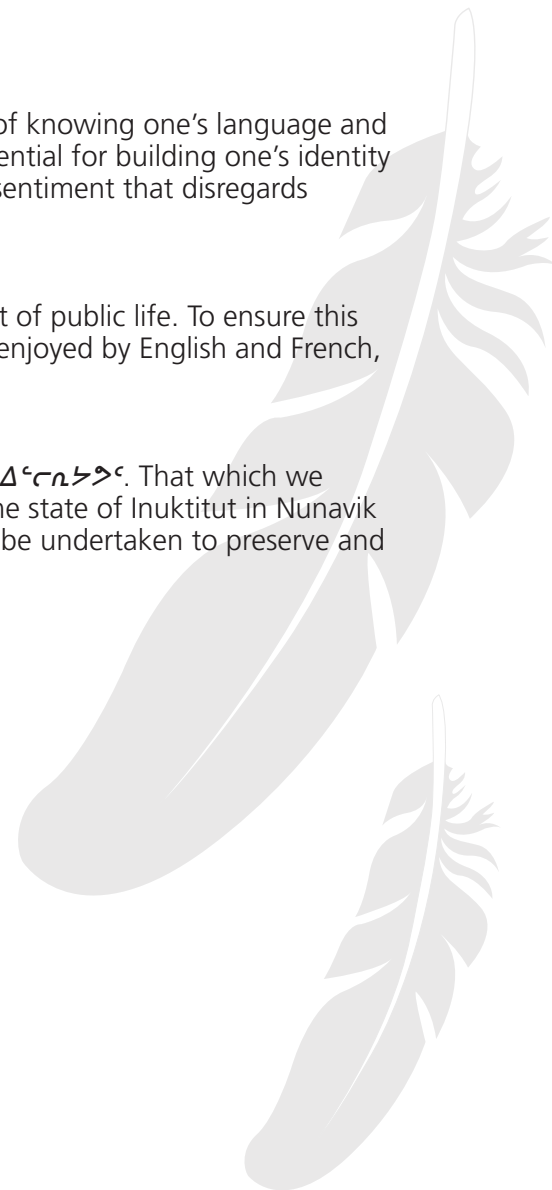
Zebedee Nungak is an Inuk originally from the Nunavik community of Puvirnituk. He is a writer, satirist, radio commentator, and former political leader who has helped produce several films and documentaries. One of these was Qallunaat: Why White People Are Funny, which won a Gemini Award. Another was The Experimental Eskimos, about being taken from his home at the age of 12 and sent to Ottawa in an experiment to determine if Inuit children could withstand being educated among Qallunaat (white) children. The film, NAPAGUNNAQULLUSI: So That You Can Stand tells the story of how a small group of Inuit and Cree visionaries fought the Quebec government and brought about Canada's first modern land-claims agreement. Zebedee Nungak lives in Kangirsuk, Nunavik. His presentation has the same title as his recently published book: Wrestling with Colonialism on Steroids: Quebec Inuit Fight for Their Homeland.

Summary

Zebedee Nungak places a high value for Inuit people, on the importance of knowing one's language and culture. For him, having an awareness of your language and culture is essential for building one's identity and self-confidence. This is all the more important in the face of colonial sentiment that disregards Indigenous identities.

Inuit people should be able to use their language in any forum and as part of public life. To ensure this widespread use, the Inuit language needs the kinds of supports currently enjoyed by English and French, including serious financial support and official status.

Zebedee Nungak also unpacked an important document called 'Illirijavut. ᐃᑦᑕᑎᐅᑦ. That which we treasure. La langue que nous chérissons (2012). This document outlines the state of Inuktitut in Nunavik today and the challenges it faces. It also provides plans of action that can be undertaken to preserve and promote the language.



Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

Zebedee summarized the five recommendations in the report 'Illirijavut. ᐃᑦᑕᑎᓴᓂᓂᑦ. That which we treasure. La langue que nous chérissons. If you would like to learn more about these recommendations or more of the insights and valuable advice offered by Zebedee Nungak, please listen to the podcast, or follow the link below to the official report:

- We call for the establishment of an Inuktitut language authority – described as a formal body or institution having the charge of vocabulary, writing systems, modernization, and official recognition of terminology for the language
- Communities need heritage centres – these would be places where Inuit identity, language, and culture would have a home. Here, stories, legends, and all aspects of Inuit identities would be maintained as living things deserving of time and attention.
- Enhancement right across the board of instruction in the language – this is about building capacity for language teaching and includes not only those in the formal education system but those outside of it, too.
- Establishment of Inuit cultural learning centres – These would be centres that teach everything Inuktitut.' This includes legends, drum dances, Inuit history, hunting techniques, clothing design, clothing making, tools and implements, hunting implements, and language.
- Establishment of a youth theatre entity – this would be an opportunity for young people that make up the majority population of Inuit to pursue interests in Inuit legends, stories, plays, and all things connected to Inuit identity.

Link to the report: Illirijavut. ᐃᑦᑕᑎᓴᓂᓂᑦ. That which we treasure. La langue que nous chérissons | Inuit Literatures ᐃᓂᐃᑦ ᐱᑦᑕᑎᓴᓂᓂᑦ Littératures inuites (uqam.ca)

Harriet St. Pierre - Métis

Harriet St. Pierre is a Michif language speaker from the Saskatchewan area. She has received several awards related to her work in Michif language development. Michif is a language developed by the Métis which uses both Native nouns, and English or French verbs

Harriet St. Pierre is an Elder. She is eighty-one years old. She is a language keeper. She speaks Michif, which is her mother tongue. She was born and raised speaking the language. She has done many types of work in her life. Her first job was working for a farmer in Saskatchewan. Afterwards, she worked at a fish plant. Then she went to work in B.C., doing professional house cleaning, working as a nurse's aide, and waitressing.

She has come back home to Saskatchewan. There, she worked in Saskatoon for St. Marie's School. She worked there as an Elder Counsellor. She has also worked in St. Michael's School as an Elder Counsellor. She has greatly enjoyed working with students. She retired at the age of sixty-five, but she continues to teach Michif.

Harriet writes:

I was born and raised in Qu'Appelle Valley in Marieval Crooked Lake Saskatchewan to a family of ten children. I went to day school in Cowessess, Saskatchewan (SK) to grade eight. After this at age sixteen, I left home to work for a farmer tending to the animals. Then I went to Kamsack, SK to work as waitress. I met this handsome man there. And after we got married and moved to Melville, SK we started our family there. Our marriage fell apart and I left taking all my six babies with me. We went to Burnaby B.C. and seventeen years later when all my children had graduated, were leaving home is when I decided I would come back home to Saskatchewan. While in Burnaby, I had gone to Vancouver Community College and then worked at numerous jobs. I came to Saskatoon where I made my home, and in 1985 I started working for the board of education in several different schools in Saskatoon until I retired when I was 65 years old. I sure was sorry that I retired as I sure missed my job. But it was not long after that I started getting calls to help out our beautiful language, Michif. Our Michif language is very important because it shows we have a Community, a Culture, and a Nation that we belong. Our language is gentle, humorous, and healing as it gives us strength in our own Nation. Currently I am teaching high school students and their teacher in Saskatoon the Michif language by zoom. They are sure great in pronouncing the Michif words. I am so very proud of them and I will continue to do all I can to revitalize the Michif language and hang on for as long as I can.

Miigwach Nohtaawiinan

For the strength to carry on

Elder St. Pierre

● **Summary**

- The interview with Harriet St. Pierre is one that shares the joy and importance of maintaining one's Indigenous language. Raised in the Michif language, Ms. St. Pierre recounts the feelings of joy and closeness she feels with her family and ancestors when speaking her language. For her, the language offers a direct connection. One cannot help but experience joy in speaking it. For her, no dishonesty can be maintained, only the truth, when she speaks Michif.
- Her life has taken her far from home, working in many jobs and places. A constant connection to home and family has been her language. For a stretch of time, she feared she might lose it, but a commitment to practice with family has helped her preserve her language.

Now, though she has retired, Ms. St. Pierre continues teaching Michif to high school students – online for the time being – and helping to create a Michif dictionary.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

This was not a pedagogical interview. However, Harriet St. Pierre had some important recommendations for the promotion and revitalization of Indigenous languages. Some of these include:

- A need for language teaching and language programs to teach language daily – one-to-two hours a week is not enough.
- More collaboration between speakers is needed to support each other in what works for teaching the language.

Mike Kanentakeron Mitchell – First Nations

Mitchell is one of the most respected First Nations leaders in Canada. Born in Akwesasne and raised by a Traditional family, Mitchell had the benefit of a strong cultural and spiritual upbringing. Fluent in the Mohawk language, Mitchell has successfully applied traditional diplomatic skills in solving today's challenges to First Nations on local, regional and national levels in all areas of development and renewal.

For three decades, Kanentakeron has served his people in a political capacity as Chief and Grand Chief in one of most volatile, yet progressive First Nations communities in Canada. His vision to help restore the independence of the Mohawk people of Akwesasne is based on applying the best of both Hotinonshonni philosophy and modern democratic government systems.

Summary

The interview with Mr. Mitchell was a non-pedagogical interview. We spoke with Mr. Mitchell for a First Nations perspective on Indigenous language revitalization.

Mr. Mitchell offered many insights into the value and importance of knowing one's language and culture as a way to overcome hardship and be successful in life. He specifically linked having this identity as being critical for the success of community members who continued their schooling on to post-secondary and tackling challenges beyond the community.

Mr. Mitchell also recounts the powerful effect that fostering language and cultural revitalization had in his community, as they reclaimed different offices or departments of the community, such as education, policing, and justice. These efforts to infuse these areas with Mohawk identity and philosophy were critical to building community success, health, and well-being.

Mr. Mitchell's interview is a powerful story of the power of language and culture and the pursuit of Indigenous Sovereignty.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

While this was not a pedagogical interview, there were several comments and themes of success discussed in the interview. Some of these are included below.

- Being proud of who you are as an Indigenous person will always help build success.
- Participating in ceremonies and cultural practices can help people heal from traumas.
- Setting your own criteria for success and focusing on building up your own identities is important to succeed.
- Changing mindsets to see that it is better for our success to know the language and the culture – this gives us strength outside of the community as well.

• Pedagogical Interviews

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Mabel Metallic – Mi'gmaq

My name is Mabel Metallic. I am a Listuguj, Quebec First Nations Mother, Grandmother (kids call me G-Ma)/translator of curriculum/editor. I have always lived in Listuguj, there is one year that I had lived in Montreal. My parents, Georgine and Louie Metallic, both from Listuguj, both taught me my mother tongue and were my best teachers.

I gave birth to my first born in Montreal. Decided then it was time to come back to Listuguj. I have 6 children; I entered into the education system in 1999 from a 6 month-program called "Bridges to Employment." That would lead to my career as a Mi'gmaq Language Teacher. Graduated from St. Thomas University of New Brunswick. In 2008, I had Native Language Certification and also graduated from UNB in 2012 with my Bachelor of Education. I taught my 6 children my mother tongue. They were my first students, so in all reality, I have been teaching for the past 36 years.

I am and have been a proud Pro Mi'gmaq Woman. Love my mother tongue and all First Nations' languages. The Mi'gmaq language is very important to me. I say it is a gift from my Creator and a gift I was given to share. The strength of language is immense. I do what I do with no effort, my language is who I am. Teach what I know and I am still learning, working on researching old vocabulary or learning, becoming more aware of them. Realizing more so that our language is in danger of extinction and by that I mean, I know the generation I am from and the generations that no longer speak. It has been a struggle on my part as a speaker/teacher of my and other children to talk about how important our language is and that it is in our hands/hearts/souls to continue to speak it or lose it. I have often tried to encourage speakers to speak our language to their children and more so their grandchildren because their children have grown. Although our Mi'gmaq Immersion Program is running well enough to this point, there is always room for improvement.

Summary

Mabel Metallic spoke about the Mi'gmaq language and work she has been involved in to promote it in her community. Long dedicated to preserving the language, she describes her experiences teaching the language to children and adults, as well as the practices for running an effective language class. She also shares details about the Listuguj immersion program for young students. This program is growing.

Mabel and her partner also raised their children to know their Indigenous language. This was not always easy to do as the children had few sources for the language outside of their parents and family. Mabel was kind enough to share some of her practices for raising her children in the language as well.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

For the classroom:

- Have routines that are consistent – these are important for classroom function.
- Establishing a safe and comfortable classroom is important for language learning.
- Teach, Practice, Repeat: TPR (as opposed to Total Physical Response TPR) – this technique can be added to, such as using it to bring in new materials, vocabulary, phrases, etc.

- • Use reward systems, which can include things from items to additional reading time at a reading centre in the classroom.
- • Learn Mi'gmaq (www.learn.migmaq.org) – an online language learning resource can be used.
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- For the family:
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- If you have other family members who speak the language, encourage them to use the language with your children as well.
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- • Use the language consistently with the children.
- • Be prepared for times when it may be frustrating (the large amount of English they may be exposed to may make them resistant to use their Indigenous language).
- • Provide the English word if you must to communicate, but try to use the language you are teaching most often.

For more of her recommendations embedded in experience, check out the full podcast.



Kevin Lewis - Cree

Kevin Lewis is a long-time advocate, instructor, curriculum developer, and researcher working on Indigenous language revitalization. Kevin researched and developed the Indigenous Language Certificate Program for the Faculty of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. This program is for teachers wanting to improve their knowledge of language and Indigenous methodologies to become better teachers of Indigenous languages.

Kevin also teaches at the kâ-nêyâsihk Culture Camp, which has a variety of language and cultural-based programs and workshops to support Cree language and culture revitalization.

He also works as an instructor with Outward Bound Canada where he teaches two modules. These are:

- Land-Based Indigenous Program for Teachers
- Winter Camping with the sled dogs

Summary

Kevin Lewis has been working in Indigenous language revitalization for a long time. At the University of Saskatchewan where he currently teaches, he developed the Indigenous Language Certificate Program. To this task he brought the experiences and knowledge he had acquired along the way. He shared about his experiences at Blue Quills college (a former Residential School now a university) and his involvement with their Language Certificate Program. He identifies many of the pioneers of Indigenous language revitalization in Canada who have influenced him. Most of them women, they travelled to many different places to see what other Indigenous Peoples were doing to revitalize their languages, to see what worked, and bring back what worked to support Indigenous languages in Canada.

Attendees to the Indigenous Language Certificate program where Kevin teaches now will be exposed to numerous best practices and strategies for Indigenous language learning.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

- Create a safe space for people to speak their Indigenous language. This means no teasing when people mispronounce or make a mistake.
- Consider using an all-year-round approach rather than the agricultural model where learners take two months off in the summer.
- Accelerated Second Language Acquisition method (ASLA). Lewis identifies this approach as involving images and no written words. It is affiliated with Steven Greymorning (alternatively, spellings for his name also appeared as Stephen), a member of the Arapaho Nation in Montana.
- Total Physical Response (TPR) – a method where words are combined with gestures to help with storing and retrieving new words. For this method, Lewis points listeners to the Chief Atahm School in B.C., Canada.
- The use of drama in the language classroom – this provides task contexts through which to learn and practice the language. An example provided was a scenario of ordering at Tim Hortons in the language.
- Root-Word-Method – this is a grammatical approach to learning polysynthetic languages. By simplifying

- the target language to its grammatical parts rather than whole words, it becomes easier to learn
- the parts, words, sentences, and structures. Knowledge of structures helps learners construct new
- meanings. The root-word-method has come up numerous times in this project and in Indigenous
- language Learning Circles.
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Colleen Omand – Cree

Colleen Omand is a Cree language teacher at Isaac Brock School in Winnipeg, Alberta. In 2016, the school launched a Cree Bilingual Program that covers kindergarten to grade 4. Colleen teaches in the second grade.

In Kindergarten, students are completely immersed in the Cree language. At grade one this shifts to 50% of the instruction in Cree, and 50% of the instruction in English. The language portion of the program is called 13 Moons on the Turtle's Back. There is a strong focus on ancestral teachings throughout the program. There is Elder involvement. There is also an in-school Lodge and Ceremonial-Smudging room. Children do not need to be fluent speakers of Cree to join, nor do their families.

Summary

Colleen Omand teaches Kindergarten, grade 1 and 2 at Isaac Brock School in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Her classroom is a multi-year classroom and she teaches her students in Cree and English using the Thirteen Moons on the Turtle's Back Curriculum. This teaching method is culturally-based and uses Traditions and ceremonies as a way of teaching the language. Much of the teaching is on the land and involves students and their families and the community. Ms. Omand's classroom teaches Cree alongside her colleague's classroom which is a multi-year Ojibwe/English environment. The two classes often attend cultural events together including land-based activities. The Thirteen Moons on the Turtle's Back Curriculum is based on the 28-day cycle, 13 moon calendar year. Students are taught about traditions associated with each moon including ceremonies, songs, movement, manipulatives, and vocabulary. The curriculum includes elements of math, science, language arts, and expressive arts. Ms. Omand teaches her students syllabics, which is a form of writing which uses symbols to represent syllables. She is an advocate of sharing the Thirteen Moons on the Turtle's Back way of teaching and has introduced some of her non-Indigenous colleagues to this method. One of the strengths of the multi-year classrooms is the connection that is formed with the students. They remain in the K-2 classroom with the same teacher for the three years and Ms. Omand describes the strong bond that she develops with her students. She said, "it's like we become their auntie." This close, familial-type relationship enriches the learning atmosphere in the classroom and is only strengthened with the involvement of family and community. Often the students' grandparents can speak the language, but the parents cannot, so when the child learns they take the language home and teach the parents.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

- When teaching, work from a strong curriculum that includes language, culture, songs, ceremony.
- Have a strong role for families to play to see the growth of their children's abilities in the language and to support their learning while at home.
- Curriculum that addresses provincial core content and Indigenous language and culture will cultivate strong results.

Colleen Omand provided a detailed description of the classroom practice and curriculum used at her school. For a more thorough discussion, please listen to the podcast. Ms. Omand also encouraged teachers who are interested to reach out and connect with her school. Prior to the Government restrictions around Covid-19, they often presented and shared their curriculum with other interested teachers. The Isaac Brock School in Winnipeg, Manitoba is open to speaking with other school divisions and teachers interested in their program.



Brian Maracle (Owennatekha) - Mohawk

Owennatekha, (Brian Maracle), along with Onekiyohstha (Audrey Maracle) are the co-founders of Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa – an adult immersion program for the Mohawk (or Kanien'kéha) language on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. Owennatekha is also an instructor in the program. From Six Nations, Owennatekha learned to speak Kanien'kéha as an adult. The Director of the program, this is a later career of sorts. Originally, Owennatekha started out in journalism, including being a radio host. He has written for the Globe & Mail, hosted a CBC Radio program on Indigenous culture and issues, and he has written two books, both non-fiction. The first book is a work to correct stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples struggling with addictions, and the second book is a powerful personal narrative of his return to Six Nations after accomplishing much in the world of journalism.

Upon returning to Six Nations, Owennatekha began a journey to reclaim his Indigenous language. Not content to stop there, he co-founded Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa in 1998. This is a full-time adult immersion language school, which has now been in operation for over 20 years.

Summary

Owennatekha unpacked the history of the program he co-founded with his partner. Originally a venue for learning the language himself, it has grown over the years into a comprehensive two-year immersion program that produces proficient speakers of the Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) language. In the interview, Owennatekha tells the story of being introduced to the Root-Word-Method (RWM) by its developer, Dr. Kanatawákhon (David Maracle), who is a linguist, speaker, and lecturer at the University of Western Ontario. The RWM combined with immersion that is paid for and two years in length are parts of how this program has achieved the success it has in developing speakers.

Owennatekha shared the perspective that creating a speaker may not be enough. Instead, their language goal is to produce someone who can raise a child in the language. Then that child can teach their children. That is how Owennatekha frames changing things for a community.

Aside from the RWM, the program combines immersion, extensive practice, and long-term learning (two-year program), that is full-time and paid for.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

The RWM showed up in the research done to identify potential interviewees for this project multiple times. It also came up in several of the interviews as a method used by different Indigenous language teachers. The RWM works well with the complex structure of polysynthetic languages, in this case Mohawk. The method does not approach things in terms of learning whole words. Instead, words are broken down into more manageable, but still meaningful pieces. As students are introduced to the parts and structures of the language in an organized way, they build up their ability to use words, make new words, and eventually sentences and paragraphs.

For more information about the RWM, this podcast episode is a good start. See also the interviews with Kevin Lewis and Dr. Marilyn Shirt. The book "The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization"

- (2018) has an entire chapter (14) on the subject. Also, Owennatekha's program, Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa has a helpful explainer on their program website: [Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa | Root Word Method](#)
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- - Students are challenged to use their ears to listen rather than writing things down.
 - As of day 1, there is no English used in the classroom.
 - A good curriculum is essential – translating their existing, relevant curriculum to a sister language to Mohawk shaved years off of development and language progress for that language initiative.
 - Advice to students: avoid being reactive. Instead, ask questions, get out there and use the language in the classroom (and out).
 - As a language program, focus on results – if you are not getting them, be willing to change what you are doing.



Emily Angulalik – Inuinnaqtun

Emily Angulalikkaa Angulalik is one of the last descendants and the youngest of eleven siblings of the first Inuit Fur Trader, the late Stephen Angulalik who traded in the Canadian Arctic around the Queen Maud Gulf area, back in the early 1920s.

Emily was born in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories and raised in the community of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut as well as in Perry River, Nunavut, where her late parents lived at their outpost camp. She has three grown children and 13 grandchildren. Emily is an Inuinnaqtun Adult Educator with the Nunavut Arctic College in Cambridge Bay and has been involved in teaching Inuinnaqtun Language Revitalization. She has been involved with the Heritage Society in Cambridge Bay since the birth of the organization in 1995. What inspires her to work within the field of language revitalization is the preservation, the practice and the use of our Inuinnaqtun language, through immersion and interactions with our knowledge keepers, our Elders from our community. It is very important to know your roots and your identity, your language and your culture and what our society brings today, take pride in living the two worlds and never forget where our ancestors come from, our language and culture must be intertwined as this creates a balance in our lives.

Summary

Emily Angulalik's language teaching approach is deeply cultural. She teaches Inuinnaqtun, which is a close language relative to Inuktitut. The approach she uses at the Nunavut Arctic College is guided by cultural principles. These principles she links as coming from her ancestors. Applied to the classroom, these principles help a great deal in teaching and learning. While she did not unpack every principle, Emily provided a review of many as well as examples as to how they would be implemented in and reflected in classroom teaching and learning.

The approach she uses is deeply welcoming and fosters a safe atmosphere for learning and practicing one's language. This is an important part of reclaiming and revitalizing the language. She identified the experience of learning one's Indigenous language as a deeply emotional and sensitive one. There are times when people may experience a wide range of emotions, including anger from intergenerational loss, intergenerational trauma, and Residential School. For these reasons, she is always careful to make time for students as they learn their language. This journey she frames as a healing journey.

Language learning for her is also cultural learning, and cultural practices are inseparable from the language classroom. She also shared a bit of the work being done by the Heritage Society in Cambridge Bay, which works within the community to promote language revitalization.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

- Create a safe space for learners as learning one's Indigenous language can be very emotional.
- Use a lot of visuals and concrete things in the language to learn at first – this can include using cultural items and tools and teaching the language around them.
- Teach language through cultural teachings and practices is helpful to support learning.



Marilyn Shirt – Cree

Dr. Marilyn Shirt is from the Saddle Lake Cree First Nation and is the Dean of Indigenous Language at Blue Quills First Nations College in Alberta. Marilyn's commitment to the revitalization of the Cree language stems from her desire to ensure that her daughter Nepeya has a Cree language community to return to. Marilyn has worked in adult education for twenty-seven years, four years in small business and four years in Early Childhood Development Cree immersion before devoting her time to Language revitalization for both Cree and Dene. She received her Bachelor in Fine Arts from the University of Calgary, a Master of Arts in Transpersonal Psychology from John F. Kennedy University and a Doctorate degree in iyiniw pim̃tisiwin kiskeyihtamowin studies from the Blue Quills First Nations College.

Summary

Marilyn unpacks how Blue Quills grew from a high school to a university, going from offering certificates in a language to degrees. At the university, they offer degrees in Cree and Dene. This is a program that uses the Root-Word-Method (RWM). Marilyn explained what a polysynthetic language is and why the RWM is a good fit for teaching and learning polysynthetic languages.

Learning an Indigenous language is difficult work. This is part of why the university offers a degree program. By having a robust degree, learners are better able to develop fluency. RWM, combined with several strategies, has led to a robust program in learning Cree. Teachers also coordinate the language focus across classes. Language learning is like a job – it needs to have a full-time commitment. If you cannot do language as a job, then trying to balance learning your language with a job and a family is a commitment that is too much for most people to become fluent in.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

There were multiple strategies and practices discussed in the interview. Some of the things discussed were the following:

- Root-Word-Method- This approach, also brought up in the interview with Kevin Lewis and Brian Maracle, and is a popular approach for teaching polysynthetic languages.
- LAMP- This stands for Language Acquisition Made Practical – and is another popular method.
- Lamp or Language Acquisition Made Practical is a method for individual study for a language. Marilyn referenced a book by Tom and Betty Brewster called, *Language Acquisition Made Practical, A Comprehensive 'How-To' Book for Learning Any Language'* (1976). One may be able to obtain copies online or at their local library. The method involves a lot of repetition to lock in learning and develop fluency.
- Total Physical Response - This approach uses gestures to help convey meaning.
- Dr. Shirt also recommends that more funds be invested in Indigenous language learning in order to reverse language loss.



Sʔímlaʔx^w Michele K Johnson - N̓syilxč̓n̓

Michele is a member of the Okanagan Indian Band. She speaks N̓syilxč̓n̓, which is a Salish language. She is the Executive Director, lead activist and teacher at the Syilx Language House in BC. Syilx Language House is a non-profit charitable society with the express purpose of creating N̓syilxč̓n̓ (Syilx, Salish, Okanagan) speakers in the Syilx Nation, through activities such as teaching adults, recording fluent Elders, forming an empowered speaking community, and running a language nest for toddlers and children with their partner organization, Ti K^{wu} Ti X̓ilx Association.

Michele has a PhD in Indigenous Language Revitalization from UBC, where she spear-headed the 'language house' model for language revitalization. When she is not manifesting language, fundraising, or tobogganing in N̓syilxč̓n̓ with toddlers, she can be found hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing.

Summary

The approach Michele uses is one that prioritizes the importance of a well-thought-out, sequenced curriculum that can be reliably followed to increased proficiency in the language. At the Language House where the program she is involved in runs, they use the sequenced curriculum in an immersion setting to do intensive language learning. The teachers are language learners themselves, who see their own language abilities develop over the course of teaching. The program is robust, running multiple years as a full-time practice of language learning. Students maintain a target average through frequent assessments in order to ensure success. When students fall below the target, these assessments can signal a need for interventions and extra support. By the time students complete the program, they will have had over 2,000 hours of language learning, a commitment that has been identified as necessary for learning their language.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

- Indigenous languages need more time to learn, such as a full work or school day – learning only on evenings, weekends, or spare time is not likely to be as successful.
- Having a sequenced curriculum that is proven – having a ready-made curriculum that takes students step-by-step through the language to increasing levels of proficiency both helps ensure learners' success and makes things much easier on teacher preparation. Instead of figuring out things anew every day, teachers who know what they are doing, where they are going and can focus on delivering the content effectively.
- Ensure your classroom learning experiences are infused with kindness and safety – learning one's Indigenous language can be very stressful.
- Frequent assessment – these can be something simple like daily quizzes, and they can be effective for getting students to study and practice the language. If students are struggling, this will also help identify that and allow for interventions of increased supports or tutoring.
- Total Physical Response (TPR) – This method is very effective for early learning levels.
- For more information about the Language House program, their website is: SYILX LANGUAGE HOUSE - Home (thelanguagehouse.ca) (www.thelanguagehouse.ca)
- Dr. Michele K Johnson can be reached at syilxlanguage@gmail.com and michelekjohnson@gmail.com



Liz Osawamick and Shirley Williams - Anishinaabe

Liz Osawamick (Giniw Miigwan) is of the Anishinaabe and Odawa Nation and is originally from Wiikwemkoong Unceded First Nations Territory located on Manitoulin Island. She is of the Beaver Clan. She is currently teaching Anishinaabemowin at Trent University. Liz utilizes Indigenous Knowledge and teaching songs and ceremonies as a core component in her teaching methods and community work facilitating various language Immersion programs and cultural teachings within First Nations communities. She is in her sixth year as President for Anishnaabemowin-Teg Inc.

Professor Shirley Ida Williams, BA, MES. Dip.NLIP

Born and raised at Wiikwemikoong, and now residing in Peterborough, Shirley taught language and culture for 18 years, and 18 summers at Lakehead University for the Native Language Instructor's Program (NLIP). She has taught mythology, orthography, Anishinaabe literature for children, and has lectured at many colleges, universities and communities on language. She is a self-publisher on Anishinaabemowin, and has published many language books, texts and stories. She is a Residential School Survivor, and has told some of her story in "where are the children." She received her Honoree Doctorate from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) in 2017.

Summary

Both Shirley and Liz have been teaching Anishinaabemowin for many years at Trent university. They discuss the differences between how they learned the language as they were growing up with how they teach the language as a second language to students today. Teaching language nowadays also involves teaching it online. They share their experiences with teaching through online platforms and the benefits and challenges of using online mediums for teaching Anishinaabemowin. Both find that teaching language and culture is something that goes hand-in-hand.

Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

- Consider recording online lessons to offer the advantage of students being able to play and replay the lesson outside of the classroom.
- Be repetitive in teaching language – in reading, writing, listening, and speaking – increase students' exposure to the language and their practice of the language.
- Use stories where students can fill in blank spaces.
- Keep learning technology as a teacher so that you will be able to make or access the resources you need to support your lessons.
- Use songs, gestures, fun, and games – language engagement through these methods can speed up student learning.
- Land-based learning as opposed to indoor classes can be very effective for language learning and hold children's attention.
- Incorporate culture in teaching the language – they go hand-in-hand.



Collection of Best Practices, Recommendations, and Resources

This is a collection of the best practices, recommendations, and resources from the different interviews. For more information and contextualization, see each individual entry and listen to their podcast interview.

Zebedee Nungak

- We call for the establishment of an Inuktitut language authority – described as a formal body or institution having the charge of vocabulary, writing systems, modernization, and official recognition of terminology for the language.
- Communities need Heritage Centres – these would be places where Inuit identity, language, and culture would have a home. Here, stories, legends, and all aspects of Inuit identities would be maintained as living things deserving of time and attention.
- Enhancement right across the board of instruction in the language – this is about building capacity for language teaching and includes not only those in the formal education system but those outside of it, too.
- Establishment of Inuit cultural learning centres – These would be centres that teach everything Inuktitut. This includes legends, drum dances, Inuit history, hunting techniques, clothing design, clothing making, tools and implements, hunting implements, and language.
- Establishment of a youth theatre entity – this would be an opportunity for young people that make up the majority population of Inuit to pursue interests in Inuit legends, stories, plays, and all things connected to Inuit identity.

Harriet St. Pierre

- There must be language teaching and language programs to teach language daily – one-to-two hours a week is not enough.
- More collaboration between speakers to support each other in what works for teaching the language would be helpful.

Mike Kanentakeron Mitchell

- Being proud of who you are as an Indigenous person will build success.
- Having ceremony and cultural practices can help people heal from traumas
- Set your own criteria for success and focus on building up your own identities
- Change mindsets to see that it is better for our success to know the language and the culture – this gives us strength outside of the community as well.

● **Mabel Metallic**



● For the classroom



- • Routines that are consistent are important for classroom function.
- • Establishing a safe and comfortable classroom is important for language learning.
- • Teach, Practice, Repeat: TPR (as opposed to Total Physical Response TPR) – this technique can be added to, such as using it to bring in new materials, vocabulary, phrases, etc.
- • Use reward systems, which can include things from items to additional reading time at a reading centre in the classroom.

For the family

- • If you have other family members who speak the language, encourage them to use the language with your children as well.
- • Use the language consistently with the children.
- • Be prepared for times when it may be frustrating (the large amount of English they may be exposed to may make them resistant to use their Indigenous language).
- • Provide the English word if you must to explain, but try to stick to the language you are teaching.

Kevin Lewis

- • Create a safe space for people to speak their Indigenous language. This means no teasing or making fun of mispronunciations.
- • Consider using an all-year-round approach rather than the agricultural model where learners take two months off in the summer.
- • Accelerated Second Language Acquisition method (ASLA). Lewis identifies this approach as involving images and no written words. It is affiliated with Steven Greymorning (alternatively, spellings for his name also appeared as Stephen), a member of the Arapaho Nation in Montana.
- • Total Physical Response (TPR) – a method where words are combined with gestures to help with storing and retrieving new words. For this method, Lewis points listeners to the Chief Atahm School in B.C., Canada.
- • The use of drama in the language classroom – this provides task contexts through which to learn and practice the language. An example provided was a scenario of ordering at Tim Hortons in the language.
- • Root-Word-Method – this is a grammatical approach to learning polysynthetic languages. By simplifying the target language to its grammatical parts rather than whole words, it becomes easier to learn the parts, words, sentences, and structures. Knowledge of structures helps learners construct new meanings. The root-word-method has come up numerous times in this project and in Indigenous Language Learning Circles.

Colleen Omand

- • Working from a strong curriculum that includes language, culture, songs, ceremonies is suggested.
- • Having a strong role for families to see the growth of their children's abilities in the language helps with success and encouragement.
- • Having curriculum that addresses the provincial core content and Indigenous language and culture gets strong results.

Brian Maracle (Owennatekha)

- Consider the use of the Root Word Method for Indigenous polysynthetic languages.
- Students are challenged to use their ears rather than writing things down as a way of retaining information.
- As of day 1 there is no English used in the classroom,
- A good curriculum is essential – translating their existing, relevant curriculum to a sister language to Mohawk shaved years off of development and language progress for that language initiative.
- Advice to students: avoid being reactive. Instead, ask questions, get out there and use the language in the classroom (and out).
- As a language program, focus on results – if you are not getting them, be willing to change what you are doing.

Emily Angulalik

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- Teach language through cultural teachings and practices.

Marilyn Shirt

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S7ímla?x^w Michele K. Johnson

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- Ensure your classroom learning experiences are infused with kindness and safety – learning one's Indigenous language can be very stressful.
- Frequent assessment – these can be something simple like daily quizzes, and they can be effective for getting students to study and practice the language. If students are struggling, this will also help to identify that and allow for interventions of increased supports or tutoring.
- Total Physical Response (TPR) – this is very effective for early learning levels.

● **Liz Osawamick and Shirley Williams**



- • Consider recording online lessons to offer the advantage of students being able to play and replay the lesson outside of the classroom.
- • Be repetitive in teaching language – in reading, writing, listening, and speaking – increase students' exposure to the language and their practice of the language.
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- • Land-based learning as opposed to indoor classes can be very effective for language learning success.
- • Incorporate culture in teaching the language – they go hand-in-hand.



Conclusion

We are incredibly grateful for the participation of everyone who answered our invitation to be interviewed, and for the knowledge and wisdom that they shared with us and for the public. We are glad to be able to make this contribution to the ongoing work to revitalize our original languages. Along the way, we have received many great recommendations and insights.

Each person interviewed spoke about the power of having one's Indigenous language. They also outlined that the path to fluency was a long one – long, but very traversable and worth the effort. Numerous interviewees identified the critical importance of increased funding needed to appropriately support Indigenous language learning. Increased funding was needed in multiple capacities, including support to run programs and also, critically, support for adults to be able to afford to study full-time. An important component of revitalizing Indigenous languages will come from adults reclaiming their languages. Adults have commitments, responsibilities, families. As we heard, to expect language to be a third wheel with family and a job, relegated to evening classes or the weekend, is insufficient. Students need to be able to take care of their families while studying full-time and to include the language use in their daily live. Major funding investments are also needed to support programs that will ensure success.

Language revitalization is also healing. As was remarked in interviews, language loss came from specific colonial practices, including Residential Schools. Reclaiming language can be a healing journey and is a step on a path of Reconciliation. For people embarking on a journey to reclaim their language, be prepared for emotions to arise. For those teaching it, be prepared for students' emotions and ensure the language classroom is a safe space where people can let go of the fear of making mistakes or being ridiculed.

Indigenous language learning is unique to different communities and contexts. Yet, there is also a great deal to be learned from other efforts and practices. Look around to see what can be useful to you and your efforts to teach and learn Indigenous languages.

The LHF will continue to work to undo and end the harms caused to the Indigenous children by Residential and Day Schools, and the Sixties Scoop and other colonial policies and practices that are unjust and which separate Indigenous Peoples from their families, their cultures, and their languages. When we regain the ability to think and speak in our language using words and ways that reflect our unique worldviews, our knowledge, our traditional governance systems, we begin to exercise our sovereignty within our Nations and communities, and we rebuild and support our Nations' healing and well-being.

This has been the LHF's first entry into the work of language revitalization, but not our last. The work is essential and ongoing. The LHF will be working to build on the success of this project to continue to work to promote Indigenous language revitalization as a key component of healing and Reconciliation. As such, the LHF will be pursuing further proposals, funding, and supports for language projects that work to connect different efforts and share practices for people to consider, adopt, or adapt for their own community needs and wellness.

