

**Discovering new pathways to old teachings: The Paul Creek Method of Second Language
Acquisition for adult Cree language learners**

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April 2018

A Master's Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Indigenous Language Revitalization
In the Departments of Indigenous Education and Linguistics

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Introduction

Indigenous peoples worldwide are fighting to retain and revitalize their languages and cultures due to the devastations faced at the hands of the colonizers and government policies (Ball & McIvor, 2013; Besner, 2016; Michel, Walton, Bourassa & Miller, 2015). They are reclaiming and revitalizing their languages by developing their own unique resources and methods that work for them and their communities (Michel et al., 2015). Indigenous peoples worldwide are leading the revitalization efforts such as the Maori of New Zealand and the Hawaiian people as well as other Indigenous groups in Australia and North America (Ball & McIvor, 2013; Coronel-Molina & McCarty 2016; McCarty, 2003). Indigenous peoples in Canada have also been fighting for their rights to teach their children in their own languages and cultures. The biggest step forward for them was when the National Indian Brotherhood published a paper called Indian control of Indian Education in 1972 (McIvor & Ball, 2013). This was the first of many steps in the right direction of revitalizing their Indigenous languages. Indigenous people are creating innovative approaches to developing their own resources, methods, strategies, and curricula to revitalize their languages in second language acquisition for their adult learners. This paper will address the need for more support and resources that need to be developed and adapted to help Cree adult second language learners. This paper will address this issue by explaining how the Paul Creek Method has been translated and adapted into Plains Cree with instructions in how to use the method for Cree teachers.

Locating myself

My name is Randy Morin and I am nēhiyaw or Plains Cree from the Big River First Nation located in Treaty 6 territory in central Saskatchewan. The community of Big River First Nation was once hailed as the most traditional reserve in Canada because it resisted colonization

attempts from Indian agents, missionaries, and government representatives to assimilate and acculturate the people for many years. It is a community that still retains and maintains much Plains Cree tradition, language, and culture. I am in my late thirties and I believe that I am the last great generation that still speaks the Plains Cree language fluently. I thank my parents, grandparents, and community for gifting me this beautiful language that I am now fighting to keep alive with the younger generations of Plains Cree in Saskatchewan.

I have had many jobs over the course of my life and my true calling in life came when I was working as a school counsellor with troubled youth from throughout Saskatchewan. I wanted to be a teacher but not just another teacher teaching the Saskatchewan curriculum. I wanted to put my gift of language and cultural knowledge to use by teaching the young people. For the last 10 years this is what I have done. I have taught in many academic settings such as organizations, schools, and universities in Saskatoon as well as in Cree language camps. I have also done much work with television for Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) as a narrator, voice actor, Cree translator, and knowledge keeper. Now I am completing the Masters of Indigenous Language Revitalization program from the University of Victoria.

I currently teach the Plains Cree language, Plains Cree culture and history, and Indigenous ways of knowing at the University of Saskatchewan in the Department of Indigenous Studies. All my past experiences have led me to this point in life as a language and culture champion. Based on all my years of teaching the Cree language to children, youth, and adults, it is my hope and dream to help people develop into beginner, intermediate and eventually fluent Cree speakers. I have assisted many people in learning to read and write in Standard Roman Orthography and in Cree syllabics. I plan to further develop successful teaching methods to

assist more people in becoming speakers that can hold a conversation in the Cree language. I will do this by translating and adapting the Paul Creek curriculum. The curriculum appears to be working in creating beginner, intermediate, and fluent speakers in the Okanagan language through the Salish School of Spokane in Washington State as well as with the Tlingit of British Columbia.

I will be contributing to the adult Cree language revitalization in this province by providing a new adult language resource to supplement the language models that are currently being used.

Background

There are currently a few different curriculum models that most of the Cree language instruction in Saskatchewan are based on. A few examples are the “*nēhiyawēwin 10, 20, 30*” which are curriculum guides that were developed by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2008) and another Grade 10-12 Cree “language as subject” curriculum model that was developed by the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre (SICC). The latter one is hard to access because SICC currently does all the printing and publishing of it. These are two main Cree curriculum models currently being used for adult learners. There is also an older Cree language workbook that was developed by Jean Okimāsis and Solomon Ratt in 1999 that many educational institutions including high schools continue to use as their main language resource for teaching the Cree language. There are also other Cree communities that have developed their own Cree language resources such as the Gift of Language and Culture website (www.giftoflanguageandculture.ca) that was developed by the Lac La Ronge Indian Band and Onion Lake Cree Nation.

These are just a few examples of some of the Cree language models that are being used in the province to teach the Cree language. They are good resources but I believe that other models are needed that have the latest methods and strategies in order to be more effective at producing adult Cree speakers. More work needs to be done to create or adapt more resources in order to produce more speakers of the Cree language. Currently, there is minimal investment from the provincial and federal governments to implement support in renewing and promoting Indigenous languages and culture in this province (Besner, 2016).

I have translated into Plains Cree the Paul Creek Language Association (PCLA) curriculum commonly known as the 'Paul Creek Method' that was developed by Chris Parken, LaRae Wiley, and Sarah Peterson in Washington State (Johnson, 2012). The resource developers have given permission for anyone to use the resource as long as they acknowledge the authors of the resource. This curriculum is comprehensive and was created for beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. I have translated and adapted the beginner curriculum level and someday hope to translate and adapt the intermediate and advanced curriculums.

The Paul Creek Method is a resource for second language adult learners that incorporates language acquisition methods such as the direct-method, Total Physical Response (TPR), TPR-Storytelling, repetition, immersion, games, and visual aids of this method. The entire curriculum takes approximately 1,000 classroom hours, or roughly the equivalent of two full years of university instruction (Johnson, 2012). It was modelled after a successful Spanish language learning resource that Chris Parkin taught for many years (Johnson, 2012). This curriculum could also be used by anyone who wants to learn the Cree language from school teachers to families. They will need to have a background knowledge of the Cree Standard Roman Orthography in order to be able read the Cree instructions that go with the manual. There are

online links available such as the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre www.sicc.sk.ca or the Gift of Language and Culture www.giftoflanguageandculture.ca that demonstrate how to pronounce the sound system of the Plains Cree “y” dialect.

The Issue

There is not enough support available for Cree adult second language learners in Saskatchewan, so this is an opportunity to introduce new teaching methods and resources to help them on their language journeys. Based on my experiences in central Saskatchewan as a Cree language educator over the last ten years, Cree language resources, models, and methods need to be changing and adapting to the latest successful methods as the current models are not producing new speakers. Some of the issues with the current models that are being used to teach the Cree language is that the grammar approach is limited and there are only beginner level models available to teach the Cree language. There needs to be models for intermediate and advanced speakers. Many communities in Saskatchewan teach only beginner Cree language classes as an elective using the direct teaching method. This is the current situation for many First Nations schools in Saskatchewan. There is little evidence to prove that this model of teaching the language as a subject or elective is effective in creating new speakers (Ball & McIvor, 2013).

The language class approach is the least effective method in creating new speakers (Michel et al., 2015). Michele Johnson estimated that it would take one hundred years to create fluent speakers by this approach (Johnson, 2016). The Paul Creek Method is a model that could be effective in teaching the Cree language in an accelerated time using language acquisition tools, methods and techniques founded on sound second language acquisition research. This model is working for the Salish people in British Columbia as it is teaching all levels of speakers and they

are achieving their goals. They stress that it takes a certain amount of time to be dedicated in going through the resource to gain some levels of proficiency. As stated by Johnson (2012), “We achieved low-intermediate speech after six hundred hours, a testament to the effectiveness of the direct acquisition method and Nsyilxcn Curriculum project” (p. 88). I believe that it may work for adult Cree language speakers because it is incorporating the methods and strategies that are used in the resource that has been proven successful for the Nsyilxcn and Tlinglit adult learners (Johnson, 2016). Communities have found that time must be dedicated to learning from the curriculum resource for it to be successful.

This project is important because it will develop and create a new language curriculum resource for Cree adult learners in Saskatchewan. The methods that will be used to teach adult learners will be connected to what we know about second language adult learners as they will be inclusive of the teaching methods that have garnered success (Michel et al., 2015). I am confident that the Paul Creek Method will be highly effective in adult Cree language teaching if learners put time and effort into learning it. As stated by Michele Johnson, she put the Paul Creek Method to a test where she, along with other adult language learners, would get together in a language learning house to learn from the curriculum. They did not have a teacher but they had the basic knowledge of how to use it. Once they knew the steps on how to master each lesson or topic, they would move on to the next topic. She found that the curriculum has successfully created speakers if the learners put the time and effort into it in (Johnson, 2016). She also finds that it can take around roughly 1,000 intensive hours to create beginner and intermediate level speakers in the Nsyilxcn and Tlingit languages and this was both teacher and individually led by the language learners (Johnson, 2016).

In my experience, and from what I have observed in many communities, the current methods and resources that have been used in the Cree language instruction in Saskatchewan for the last 30 years have rarely produced fluent speakers. There needs to be an investment of time, scope and sequence put into the current methods to be as successful as the Paul Creek Method. This curriculum has been developed with successful methods in place that are working for other nations in revitalizing their languages for many years.

Literature Review

There is not a lot in terms of literature that has been written specifically for Indigenous adult second language learners but that is slowly changing as more Indigenous scholars are emerging in the field (Gordon, 2009; Maracle, 2002; McIvor, 2012). Adult second language learners have not been a priority for the Indigenous language revitalization (ILR) movement over the past few decades (McIvor, 2012). Adult learning has always been happening but it is now emerging within the field of ILR because Indigenous people are starting to document their language revitalization journeys. This aspect of ILR is starting to get more attention due to the work of emerging Indigenous scholars drawing attention to the area as well as the urgency to revitalize Indigenous languages. Indigenous language revitalization is now a legitimate part of this field of study (Hinton, 2011; Johnson, 2012; McIvor, 2012).

There are several authors in the literature on adult second learners who believe that adult learners can play a big part in language revitalization. Some call these adult learners who are of professional or parental age, the “missing generation” (Hinton, Florey, Gessner, & Manatowa-Bailey, 2018). Other scholars believe that adult learners can play a big part in the language revitalization efforts in Indigenous communities (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; McIvor, 2012). The literature on Indigenous adult learners has been dominated by non-Indigenous scholars such as

Leanne Hinton and Teresa McCarty but there are now Indigenous scholars who are emerging to contribute to this field of literature such as Onowa McIvor, Michele Johnson, Trish Rosborough, Belinda Daniels, Peter Jacobs, Steven Greymorning, and Brian Maracle.

Within the literature dealing with adult second language learners there are a few common models that are used to teach adult learners such as language classes and individual learning methods, there is the Master Apprentice Model that was developed by Leanne Hinton (1997), the Total Physical Response (TPR) method that was developed by James Asher (2012) and the Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) that was developed by Stephen Greymorning (1997). There are also some new methods that are being used quite successfully to revitalize language amongst adult second language learners such as the ‘Root-Word method’ developed by David ‘Kanatawakhon’ Maracle in the 1980’s (Hinton, 2018). The Root-Word method uses a cognitive, bottom-up approach to language acquisition where learners build on grammatical features from simple to increasingly complex grammatical features (Green & Maracle, 2018). The Root-Word method has been highly successful in Ontario to create adult second language speakers since 1998. Another successful method that is revitalizing Indigenous languages involves using sign language called the Where Are Your Keys (WAYK) method and was developed by Evan Gardner and Bryce Folger by using techniques from American Sign Language (Gardner & Ciotti, 2018). There is also the group learning immersion model where language learners learn in a larger group setting. The literature for group-based learning seems less documented and shows the need for more research in finding the best methods to teach adult learners. There is an emerging body of literature that is focussing on having large group immersion language classes to teach adult learners rather than letting them learn on their own. (Alexie & Marlow 2009; Daniels-Fiss, 2008; Maracle, 2002).

Project Actions

I have translated and adapted the beginner's level adult second language learning resource based on of the Paul Creek Method to support adult Cree language learners in Saskatchewan. I have also translated the instructional manual entirely into Cree so that fluent Cree teachers will be able to use it based on the Cree instructions that go with each lesson. When my project is complete, I will share the beginner curriculum with other Cree language teachers through email in PDF format as well as with other various provincial and federal organizations and school divisions throughout Saskatchewan. Future plans will include finding a permanent home for the curriculum to be stored online so that is it accessible to teachers and learners once my project is done.

Outcomes

The outcomes from my project are the following:

1. I translated and adapted into Plains Cree "Y" dialect version of the Paul Creek Method beginner's manual for use by Cree language teachers.
2. The translation and adaptation of a Plains Cree "Y" dialect version of the Paul Creek instructional teacher's guide. The teacher's guide will be a separate document to help Cree teachers understand the Paul Creek Method and guide them on *how* they could and should use the beginner's manual.
3. This short research paper accompanies the manual & guide and explains the process undertaken, includes a review of the recent and relevant adult second language learners' literature and explains how the curriculum is planned for use in Saskatchewan or by the author.
4. Once the project is approved, the beginner's manual and instructional guide will be shared via email and social media with other Cree language teachers. This will be a post-project step once

everything is completed. It will be shared in a PDF email to Cree language teachers who are working with adult learners in schools or organizations. I will share it with other organizations giving them permission to add to their websites such as the Cree Literacy Network Facebook group, the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre, the Gift of Language and Culture website, post-secondary education institutions that teach Cree such as First Nations University of Canada, University of Saskatchewan, Blue Quills University, University of Alberta, and University of Manitoba. I will ensure it is accessible on at least one public website that I can link instructors to.

Applying the Paul Creek Method

I first learned about this adult language learning method through scholarly articles written by Michele Johnson. I also learned about the work she was doing from other authors who referenced her and Chris Parken's work with the Salish and Tlingit people. The success they were having with the Paul Creek method creating new speakers of the Salish and Tlingit people was what caught my interest. Johnson (2012) reported that it takes roughly 1,000 hours of instruction to get people to an intermediate speaking level. This was the first time I learned about a method that was touted as being highly successful in creating new speakers. This is a sequenced curriculum resource; it is immersion-based using a direct method approach. The resource is based on community language learning and incorporates Total Physical Response (TPR) that has scaffolding lessons for various styles of learners (Johnson, 2017).

Once learning of the method, I contacted the creators of the Paul Creek Method to see if I could get permission to use their work for my language work in Saskatchewan and they agreed. I wanted to try this resource in the Plains Cree language because the current resources being used by Cree language teachers are not creating fluent speakers. After analyzing the Paul Creek

method, I was a bit skeptical of it creating new speakers because of how it is structured and organized. It starts off with greetings, colours, and numbers, which are typical in Indigenous language learning. I was hoping that it had something new to contribute in teaching adult learners. I have not yet used it because I have not yet trained in the method but I did like that it uses pictures and Total Physical Response model in teaching learners. The pictures aid in language learning similarly to Arapaho language speaker and teacher Steven Greymorning's model of language teaching (1997). I found the direct method of teaching was also not groundbreaking as this is the current model of instruction of Cree language instructors. I do believe that many people are achieving language proficiency from the Paul Creek Method because they put the time and effort of learning the beginner, intermediate, and advanced curriculums that come from it. I also would like to see more hands-on learning or outdoor learning incorporated into the curriculum that are more aligned to how I learned my Cree language.

It would have been great to have more real life examples of learning the various concepts. For example they could have suggested activities to go with each topic such as greeting people on the street or going out in nature to point out the colours and numbers. Something along those lines would have helped to connect learners with organic real language learning. Also the resource does not seem to include any Indigenous philosophy or ways of knowing such as sharing circles, smudging, prayer, meditation, or including elders or outdoor experiential learning opportunities. I was also surprised that the curriculum did not come with detailed instructions for teachers on how to use and teach it. The developers were pretty vague in the instructions and therefore I found the teacher's guide difficult to interpret. I understand that the Paul Creek Method developers put on workshops for teachers on how to teach adult language learners using the Paul Creek Method. This might explain why the teaching instructions were

vague and hard to understand. I would like to attend a workshop by the developers of the method in order to understand it from their perspective. I would like to use this resource in a class as a stand-alone resource or to supplement other resources. I might use or take parts of the Paul Creek Method and add it my beginner level Cree course at the University of Saskatchewan in September 2018. I will share it with language teachers via email in PDF format so they can use it as an additional resource in their classes as well. I will also share it with any individuals who are asking for Cree language resources to help them in their personal language journeys. I would like to try it out in a summer language class I am part of to see how teachers and learners experience in their language learning.

Evaluation

My project success will be measured by the successful completion of the translation and adaptation of a Plains Cree “Y” dialect version of the Paul Creek Beginner’s Manual and accompanying Instructional manual translated in Plains Cree. This can be measured by when it is ready to be shared with other Cree language teachers and learners via email and social media as described above.

Human Research Ethics

My project will not require human ethics approval because it deals with translating and adapting a second language learning resource that requires no human interaction or participation.

Future works

In future work, I will analyse, assess, and evaluate the success of this method based on the feedback from Cree teachers and learners because it will be the first time this kind of method and curriculum will be employed in Saskatchewan. The only way to measure its success would be to try it out and evaluate its success based on teachers and learners. The authors of the Paul Creek

Model and curriculum offer a two-day workshop on how to use it so taking this training would be a future goal to fully grasp the methods. This project could also lead to a research paper, academic publication, or a future doctoral dissertation for myself or others who might be inspired by it.

Conclusion

My project brings a new language model to many Cree language teachers in Saskatchewan to help revitalize the Cree language among adult second language learners who are struggling to find ways to revitalize their languages. It will create renewed interest and motivation for Cree learners and Cree teachers alike because it is something innovative that has been proven to be successful for the Salish and Tlingit people. Through hard work and determination, this project will help to accelerate second language acquisition among all learners of the Cree language. My project may inspire other Indigenous language revitalization champions to search for and try other successful methods, resources, and curriculum models from other languages to revitalize their languages in their own lands.

In summary, this project is important for Cree adult second language learners who are trying to find new ways to learn their ancestral language. From my experience, our rich language and culture is being lost at an alarming rate due to many factors such as ongoing colonization, governmental policies, legislations, apathy, among many issues. Indigenous people must continue to invest time, money, and energy in developing and training in more effective methods, strategies, and resources to help revitalize their languages. This can begin with borrowing and adapting other methods that are working with other Indigenous people such as the Paul Creek Method.

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