

Anishinaabemodaa Pane Oodenang – A Qualitative Study of Anishinaabe
Language Revitalization as Self-Determination in Manitoba and Ontario

by

Brock Pitawanakwat
B.A., University of Regina, 2000
M.A., University of Victoria, 2002

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Indigenous Governance

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Abstract

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Anishinaabeg (including Odawa, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Saulteaux, and Chippewa) are striving to maintain and revitalize Anishinaabemowin (the Anishinaabe language) throughout their territories. This dissertation explores Anishinaabemowin revitalization to find out its participants' motivations, methods, and mobilization strategies in order to better understand how Indigenous language revitalization movements contribute to decolonization and self-determination. Interviews with Anishinaabe language activists, scholars, and teachers inform this investigation of their motivations and pedagogies for revitalizing Anishinaabemowin. Interviews took place in six Canadian cities as well as four reserves: Brandon, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Toronto and Winnipeg; Lac Seul First Nation, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Sagamok First Nation, and Sault Tribe of Chippewas Reservation. A variety of language revitalization initiatives were explored including those outside the parameters of mainstream adult educational institutions, particularly evening and weekend courses, and language or culture camps. This investigation addresses the following questions: Why have Anishinaabeg attempted to maintain and revitalize Anishinaabemowin? What methods have they employed? Finally, how does this

emerging language revitalization movement intersect with other efforts to decolonize communities, restore traditional Anishinaabe governance, and secure self-determination? The study concludes that Anishinaabemowin revitalization and Anishinaabe aspirations for self-determination are interconnected and mutually-supporting goals whose realization will require social movements supported by effective community-based leadership.

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Dedication

Margaret Mary Pitawanakwat-ban

(May 17, 1950 – July 10, 1995)

Chapter One: Introduction

[L]anguage...is a fundamental attribute of self-recognition, and of the establishment of an invisible national boundary less arbitrary than territoriality, and less exclusive than ethnicity. ...[L]anguage provides the linkage between the private and public sphere, and between the past and the present, regardless of the actual acknowledgement of a cultural community by the institutions of the state...in a world submitted to cultural homogenization by the ideology of modernization and the power of global media, language, as the direct expression of culture, becomes the trench of cultural resistance, the last bastion of self-control, the refuge of identifiable meaning.¹

Linguists estimate that half of the world's approximately 7,000 languages will disappear by 2100.² In Canada, Indigenous language loss is occurring at an even faster rate than the global average. Only 36 of Canada's approximately 60 Indigenous languages are still spoken today.³ Of these surviving languages, only four are expected to still be spoken in 2100: Anishinaabemowin, Dene, Inuktitut, and Nehiyawewin (Cree). Anishinaabemowin is the most vulnerable of the four "viable" Indigenous languages because it has the lowest rate of intergenerational transmission to children from a fluent parent or grandparent. However, all Indigenous languages in Canada are endangered and require immediate action to restore intergenerational transmission. Only 25% of

¹ Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture - Volume II: The Power of Identity*, Vol. II, III vols. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 52.

² Tasaku Tsunoda, *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005), 3.

³ Lenore Grenoble, "Endangered Languages," in *One Thousand Languages: living, endangered, and lost*, 214-235 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 232. Anishinaabemowin is one of an estimated 53 to 70 Indigenous languages that were spoken in Canada prior to colonization. "The actual number is not clear, since the languages have not been standardized, and attempts at classification are complicated by the existence of dialects." Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples - Volume 3: Gathering Strength*, Vol. 3, 5 vols. (Ottawa, ON: Canada Communication Group, 1996), 604.

Anishinaabe children learn Anishinaabemowin as their first language directly from their parents and only 16% are raised with it as the main language in the home.⁴ Anishinaabemowin is also in decline in the majority (69%) of Anishinaabe communities.⁵

The primary cause of Indigenous language loss here in North America is European colonization. Canadian Indian policy sought to undermine Indigenous independence and eradicate Indigenous languages. The efforts to spread European languages in the Americas were fuelled by colonists' desires for administrative efficiency, and now discredited notions of cultural and racial European supremacy. Dispossessed of their lands and defenceless against imported pathogens, Indigenous peoples suffered massive population declines (as high as 90-95%) soon after contact throughout the hemisphere.⁶ Ancient ties that bound Indigenous peoples to their ceremonies, their histories, their lands and their languages were attacked simultaneously: legislation banned Indigenous ceremonies, Indigenous children were forced to attend assimilative residential schools, and entire communities were forcibly displaced from their traditional territories onto reserves.

⁴ Mary Jane Norris and Lorna Jantzen, "From Generation to Generation: Survival and Maintenance of Aboriginal Languages Within Families, Communities and Cities," *From Generation to Generation: Survival and Maintenance of Aboriginal Languages Within Families, Communities and Cities*, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, April 01, 2005, http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/pr/ra/fgg_e.pdf (accessed July 26, 2007), 36.

⁵ Roger Wilson Spielmann, *'You're So Fat!'" Exploring Ojibwe Discourse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 59.

⁶ Charles C Mann, *1491 - New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 99-100.

Generally Canada sought cultural, economic, and social assimilation rather than the physical extermination of its Indigenous population, but since World War Two, public intolerance of other forms of genocide whether linguistic, physical, spiritual or territorial, has increased. Indigenous peoples successfully defied the Canadian state to maintain their ceremonies, land, language, and sacred histories. Starting in 1951, changes to the *Indian Act* removed the prohibition against Indigenous ceremonies and the wearing of traditional regalia. Aboriginal land title was finally recognized in 1973 by Canada's Supreme Court and negotiations began to settle outstanding land claims.⁷ Even the residential school system was dismantled, but the assimilative goals of the Canadian education system remain intact: Indigenous histories and languages are still ignored or marginalized.⁸ Canada's suppression of Indigenous languages suggests the necessity of their maintenance and revitalization: Indigenous languages are an important symbol of Indigenous identity and nationhood. In response, Anishinaabeg are actively organizing to restore their ancestral language throughout their territories. Today, there are an estimated 43,000

⁷ It is important to note that recognition of Aboriginal title by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1973 has yet to resolve more than a few of the hundreds of outstanding claims across the country. The failures of the British Columbia Treaty Process is merely one example among many that show that Canada continues to stall efforts to correct historical injustices that occurred in relation to Indigenous lands.

⁸ Although the residential school system has been dismantled, parallels have been drawn with the high number of Indigenous children who have been apprehended by provincial and territorial governments and remain under state care in non-Indigenous homes. The consequence is that many Indigenous families continue to be denied the right to raise their own children.

speakers of the various dialects of Anishinaabemowin,⁹ with approximately 83% living in just two Canadian provinces: Manitoba and Ontario.¹⁰

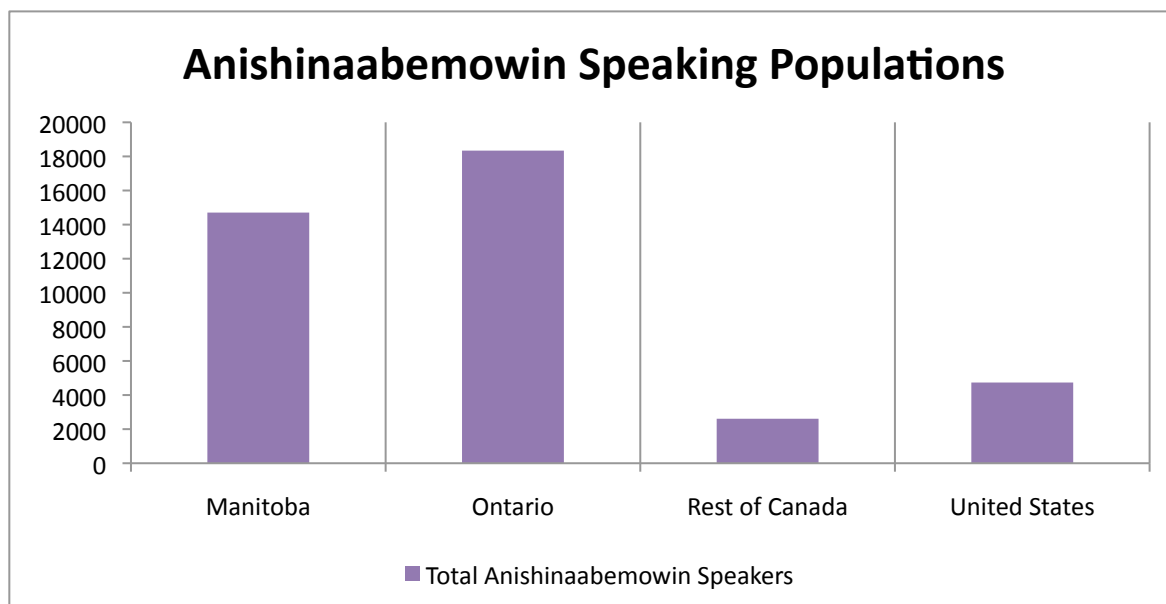


Figure 1.1. Distribution of Anishinaabemowin Speaking Population by Region (2006 Census Data)

This dissertation explores Anishinaabe revitalization (AR) efforts in these two provinces which encompass the primary Anishinaabe homelands. The data was collected through qualitative interviews with Anishinaabemowin revitalization participants and through a review of the relevant literature in three fields:

⁹ Co-authors Nicholas Ostler and José Antonio Flores Farfán identify the following dialects in making this estimate: “Western or Plains Ojibwe (also known as Saulteaux, Central Ojibwe, Northern Ojibwe (Severn Ojibwe, verging into Oji-Cree), Minnesota Ojibwe or Chippewa spoken in the USA, and Eastern Ojibwe with Ottawa (Odawa or Odaawa) spoken in Ontario and Michigan.” Nicholas Ostler and José Antonio Flores Farfán, “Languages of the Americas,” in *One Thousand Languages: living, endangered, and lost*, 190-213 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 197.

¹⁰ According to the 2006 Census, there are 24,025 Ojibwe speakers and 11,630 Oji-Cree (Severn dialect of Ojibwe) speakers in Canada. Ontario has the bulk of both dialects with 12,155 Ojibwe speakers and 6,185 Oji-Cree speakers followed by Manitoba with 9,290 Ojibwe speakers and 5,415 Oji-Cree speakers. Statistics Canada, *Population reporting an Aboriginal identity, by mother tongue, by province and territory (2006 Census)*, January 16, 2008, <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo38b-eng.htm> (accessed June 21, 2009).

Anishinaabe Studies, Indigenous Governance, and Language Revitalization. I reviewed this material as it relates to Anishinaabemowin Revitalization to ask the specific question: How are Anishinaabeg mobilizing to preserve and promote their ancestral language of Anishinaabemowin? Anishinaabe Studies is filled with testaments to the language's power and place in the lives of its speakers while the Indigenous Governance literature stresses the importance of maintaining Indigenous languages to preserve their intrinsic concepts of the relationships between people and the rest of creation. Language Revitalization resources emphasize the importance of effective, local leadership for successful language maintenance and revitalization projects. Combining these contributing literatures with the qualitative interviews created the theoretical foundations for this dissertation. I will proceed with a more detailed description of the research methodology later in the introduction, as well as the specific data collection and analytical methods of autoethnography, qualitative interviews, and Grounded Theory.

Before exploring this emerging Indigenous movement, I will briefly provide historical context to answer the question, "Who are the Anishinaabeg?" For the purpose of this dissertation, my focus will be on three related peoples who embrace the term Anishinaabeg: the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi. My reserve, Whitefish River First Nation, in Birch Island, Ontario, has descendants of all three Anishinaabe peoples who spoke a mutually-intelligible language, Anishinaabemowin, and maintained an ancient alliance known today as the Three Fires Confederacy. There are alternate terms for our language, but I will

generally use the term Anishinaabemowin to refer to all dialects including those of the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi. The shared language of Anishinaabemowin unites us as one people who refer to ourselves individually as Anishinaabe and collectively as Anishinaabeg. There are many alternate spellings for the Anishinaabe people: Chippewa (primarily used in the United States) as well as Ojibwa, Ojibwe, or Ojibway.

Anthropologists and linguists have attempted to categorize the different peoples and their languages with various terms, but Anishinaabeg complexity defies clear taxonomic classification. Anishinaabeg traded with and married among their neighbours so the distinctions between them and others are often difficult to discern. Although there are different accounts of Anishinaabe creation stories, Anishinaabeg lived around and west of the Great Lakes when they first came into contact with Europeans. Colonization dispersed descendants over a vast geographical area that now includes Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta in the north, and Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Kansas, and Oklahoma in the south. Although the focus of this dissertation will be on the Anishinaabeg in Manitoba and Ontario, I will use the term Anishinaabe-aki to refer to all Anishinaabe territories whether traditional or contemporary including urban areas.

Though European colonization changed the boundaries of Anishinaabe-aki through displacement, trade, and warfare, their traditional political economy remained largely intact well into the 19th and 20th centuries. The Anishinaabeg were governed by a hereditary clan system and were intimately connected to the

landscape. Over time, their freedom and the frontiers of their territory were gradually reduced by British, American, and then Canadian encroachment. The most drastic change was the establishment of the reserve system, which dispossessed Anishinaabeg of all but one percent of their traditional territory. This massive expropriation of wealth further exploited Indigenous labour. Depending on the time and location, Anishinaabeg relied on diverse activities such as farming, fishing, fur trapping, logging, military service, trading, and wild rice harvesting. Today, opportunities for traditional land or resource-based economic activities are so limited that survival necessitates participation as wage labourers in the resource and service sectors of the North American economy.

Approximately half of the Anishinaabe population in Canada now live in Canadian cities in Anishinaabe-aki which have Anishinaabe names: Odaawaa (Ottawa); Mishi-zaagiing (Mississauga/Toronto); Baawiting (Sault Ste. Marie); Nswi-aakamok (Sudbury), Gaa-minitik-aweyaak (Thunder Bay); Wazhashkonigamiing (Kenora); Wiinibiigong (Winnipeg); and Okanan Gaa-izhi-ategin (Regina).¹¹ These place-names remind us that the Anishinaabeg migration to these cities is not an arrival, but rather a return to the areas from which their ancestors were evicted by Canadian reserve policy. In all of these cities, Indigenous peoples are numerical minorities with marginal influence on the liberal democratic governance of urban institutions such as city councils and school boards. These major societal changes have had reverberating impacts

¹¹ The glossaries of the following two sources were used for the place names cited here. Basil Johnston, *Honour Earth Mother* (Warton, ON: Kegedonce Press, 2003). Pat Ningewance, *Talking Gookom's Language: Learning Ojibwe* (Lac Seul, ON: Mazinaate Press, 2004).

on the Anishinaabeg, with one of the most dramatic being the decline of Anishinaabemowin fluency. Although language loss has occurred in almost every Indigenous community, it has accelerated in urban environments. This trend is worrisome for overall language maintenance, because the urban Indigenous population is growing and has already surpassed the on-reserve population.

Can and Should Anishinaabemowin be Revitalized?

Every language contains within it a unique history and perspective that is part of humanity's collective intellectual wealth. Anishinaabemowin also has intrinsic value to Anishinaabeg that is rooted in their history, identity, spirituality, and territory. Basil Johnston, Anishinaabe author and language advocate, writes, "For our ancestors to have created a language that is at the same time simple in structure and construction, rich and complex in range and depth of meanings, and musical and moving is extraordinary."¹² Many Anishinaabeg consider their ancestral language to be a sacred gift from Gzhe-manidoo (The Creator or Great Mystery) and spiritual revitalization has helped rekindle their interest to become fluent. The late Anishinaabe Elder Niibaa-giizhig (Archie Mosay) insists that English could not be used in ceremonies because the Spirit would understand only Anishinaabemowin.¹³

In his biography of Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones), historian Donald Smith describes this famous Anishinaabe political and spiritual leader's struggle

¹² Basil Johnston, *Anishinaubae Thesaurus* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2007), viii.

¹³ Anton Treuer, *Living Our Language: Ojibwe Tales and Oral Histories* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), 19.

to learn English. “[Kahkewaquonaby] must have found English an impoverished tongue, especially in its vocabulary for describing nature. So specific is Ojibwa, for example, that a person could not say “tree” without including internal and external vowel shifts specifying which tree - alone or grouped, what kind of tree, and whether it grew on a hill or was coming into leaf.”¹⁴ Native Studies professor Roger Spielmann, the author of *You’re So Fat: Exploring Ojibway Discourse*, learned Anishinaabemowin as an adult and describes how Indigenous languages are inextricably connected to their philosophies and worldviews.

*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 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.*¹⁵

If learning an Indigenous language has such a profound impact on a non-Indigenous academic such as Spielmann, imagine the decolonizing potential for Indigenous peoples. Haunani-Kay Trask is one of many Indigenous scholars who believes learning one’s own language decolonizes the mind by permitting “thinking in one’s own cultural referents [which] leads to conceptualizing in one’s own world view, which, in turn, leads to disagreement with and eventual opposition to the dominant ideology.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers - The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 42.

¹⁵ Spielmann, *You’re So Fat!*, 238-239.

¹⁶ Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 43.

Odawa scholar Cecil King is a fluent speaker of his language and also an advocate of decolonizing through Indigenous languages. King objects to the categories applied to Indigenous peoples by social scientists, which he feels have begun to distort Indigenous self-perceptions. King describes struggling to “unlock the classificatory chains choking our dynamic languages and growing, changing lives. How can we learn how our language is structured, how our world of languages was created, if we still must parse, analyze, and chop them up to fit the grammar of other languages?”¹⁷

*The cumulative effects of all this are now evident. We have been redefined so many times we no longer quite know who we are. Our original words are obscured by the layer upon layer of others' definitions laid on top of them. We want to come back to our own words, our own meanings, our own definitions of ourselves, and our own world.*¹⁸

Since learning an Indigenous language is historically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually important, then why are so many Indigenous peoples failing to do so? There is no easy answer to this question. It is unfortunate that many Indigenous are disinterested or even hostile to the idea of learning their language. Generations of assimilative education have left their mark and many negative perceptions persist that multilingualism is divisive, unnatural, confusing, and that language shift to English is a “positive, evolutionary process with which we would be unwise to interfere.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Cecil King, "Here Come the Anthros," in *Indians & Anthropologists: Vine Deloria Jr. and the Critique of Anthropology*, 115-119 (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 117.

¹⁸ King, "Here Come the Anthros," 116.

¹⁹ I wish to clarify that the author is listing, rather than endorsing, some common arguments against Indigenous language maintenance or revitalization. Erin O'Sullivan, "Aboriginal Language Retention and Socio-Economic Development: Theory and

In conducting my research, even with other Indigenous scholars, I have been concerned by how engrained these negative notions have become among our own people. Some feel it is neither desirable nor necessary to know our ancestral languages. One such scholar is Shawn Wilson, author of *Research is Ceremony – Indigenous Research Methods*. In this book, Wilson ignores Indigenous languages; one has to look back to his earlier writing to understand why. Wilson writes that Indigenous languages are unnecessary in a previous article titled “What is an Indigenous Research Methodology?”

A part of my work has been mastering language to find ways of explaining. Language mastery can be used in a bad way to make people feel small or it can be used in a good way to explain concepts. Indigenous languages have words that do this, but there are words like that in English too. I don't think it is helpful to make people who cannot speak an Indigenous language feel bad about it. But I do think that it is important that everyone masters the language that they do speak.²⁰

I agree with Wilson that shaming people for not speaking an Indigenous language is unhelpful. However, it is disheartening to see Indigenous intellectuals declare that they have no need for Indigenous languages to do Indigenous research.

I believe a more appropriate response is to acknowledge our responsibility, both collective and individual, to reclaim and relearn Indigenous languages, for our communities and for ourselves. Fortunately, other scholars have decried the lack of attention to Indigenous languages in Indigenous

Practice," in *Aboriginal Conditions - Research as A Foundation For Public Policy*, 136-163 (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2003), 141-143.

²⁰ Shawn Wilson, "What Is an Indigenous Research Methodology?" *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 25, no. 2 (2001): 179.

scholarship. Neal McLeod is a Nehiyow (Cree) scholar from Saskatchewan who urges Indigenous scholars to study, and help revitalize, their languages.

While Indigenous Studies should seek to articulate and expand Indigenous paradigms, it must also help to revitalize Indigenous languages. It is unfortunate that the place of Indigenous languages is minimal in some Indigenous Studies departments. Without knowledge of Indigenous languages, there is really no way of understanding in a holistic way the life-world of Indigenous people, and the task of articulating Indigenous paradigms becomes impossible. Language, as our old people tell us, and as many people in other cultures have known, is the vehicle for the transmission of ideas and world views. In an interview, John B. Tootoosis, an important twentieth-century Cree leader, says he believes: 'Language is power.' Language guides a people and helps to create a space wherein tribal memories linger.²¹

Encouraging such positive attitudes towards Indigenous languages is vital to their revitalization. This topic will be explored in depth in Chapter Three.

Unfortunately, fostering such positive attitudes can be challenging when Anishinaabemowin is ranked in the Guinness book of world records as one of the world's most difficult languages to learn. Basil Johnston counters these intimidating notions that learning his language is nearly impossible.²²

In all, the total number of prefixes, verbs, nouns, and suffixes that make up the basic vocabulary of the Anishinaubae language probably does not exceed 5,000; yet, the ability to combine these many prefixes and suffixes with roots adds an immense number of words to a working vocabulary. A person speaking the Anishinaubae language will need to memorize no more than 700 prefixes, 3,500 roots, and 100 suffixes to be fluent and to be in command of thousands of words.²³

Fortunately for aspiring learners, there are examples of proficient Anishinaabemowin speakers who acquired the language as adults. Native

²¹ Neal McLeod, "Indigenous Studies: Negotiating the Space between Tribal Communities and Academia," in *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies*, 27-39 (Saskatoon, SK: University Extension Press, 2000), 29.

²² Louise Erdrich, *Books & Islands in Ojibwe Country - Traveling in the Land of My Ancestors* (New York: National Geographic Directions, 2003), 82.

²³ Johnston, *Anishinaubae Thesaurus*, viii.

Studies professor Roger Spielmann proved that learning Anishinaabemowin as an adult is possible, and offers advice to other Anishinaabemowin as a second language (ASL) learners. He recommends learning the language by phrases from fluent mother-tongue speakers by recording them, reciting the phrases, and then practicing them in the community.²⁴ Historian Anton Treuer is an Ojibwe professor at Bemidji State University and also recommends learning the language by recording fluent speakers. However, Treuer's preferred method for aspiring language learners is to live with a fluent speaker.²⁵ He encourages seeking out opportunities to speak and listen to fluent speakers at ceremonies and social events, and recommends listening to audio recordings, as well as creating one's own recordings, of fluent elders using the language conversationally. Henry Flocken is yet another Anishinaabe ASL learner and language activist. His recommendations are similar to those offered by Spielmann and Treuer, but he also suggests that aspiring learners seek spiritual support by the ritual offering of tobacco. "Every effort we make with tobacco is followed with double investment by helpers."²⁶

²⁴ Spielmann, *'You're So Fat!'*, 237-238.

²⁵ Anton Treuer, "Building a Foundation for the Next Generation: A Path for Revival of the Ojibwe Language," *Oshkaabewis Native Journal* 3, no. 1 (1996), 4-5. Treuer's recommendation can be followed with an invaluable guide that explains how adult language learners can acquire an Indigenous language even when only a few speakers remain. Linguist Leanne Hinton developed a method to revitalize Indigenous languages in California through one-on-one language instruction between a fluent "master" and an "apprentice." Leanne Hinton, Nancy Steele and Matt Vera, *How to Keep Your Language Alive: A Commonsense Approach to One-on-one Language Learning* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2002).

²⁶ Henry Flocken, "Anishinaabe Sovereignty and the Ojibwe Language," *Oshkaabewis Native Journal* 3, no. 1 (1996), 20.

Other Indigenous scholars have made similar appeals to potential adult learners to learn an Indigenous language later in life. Waziyatawin is an adult learner who grew up hearing the Dakota language but did not begin speaking until she attended university. She agrees with Hinton that young parents are often the most enthusiastic supporters of Indigenous language programming.

In many communities the people most committed to language revitalization are young parents who would like their children to be raised with greater language abilities than themselves. These young parents may have had little or no exposure to their language growing up and as a consequence feel like they have suffered or at least missed out on important knowledge and teachings. Because they desire greater opportunities for their children, they may be the most enthusiastic population for language programming. Any language efforts should begin with the population of people who are most supportive and excited about language learning, as they will help sustain the momentum required for long-term language work.²⁷

Waziyatawin describes how we learn language as children, and notes that there also needs to be patience and flexibility for adult language learners.

As we grow older, however, we rarely have a language environment where we are allowed to learn a second or third language in this way. Many adult language classes do not allow room for such 'mistakes,' and we often feel pressured to speak in complete, correct sentences. Furthermore, as we get older our capacity for language learning diminishes. At the time when we might need the most patience granted us in a language learning environment, we are the least likely to have it, despite the positive encouragement from committed teachers. Worries about good classroom grades or looking foolish in front of our peers actually hinder us from going through the natural process of language learning that includes a great deal of imperfect speech.²⁸

Linguist Leanne Hinton also dispels the prevailing myth that adults cannot learn languages. She recommends language programs adopt a “family component”

²⁷ Waziyatawin, "Defying Colonization Through Language Survival," in *For Indigenous Eyes Only - A Decolonization Handbook*, 109-126 (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2005), 118.

²⁸ Waziyatawin, "Defying Colonization Through Language Survival," 120.

with “real communication situations” in order to ensure that adult family members are involved and that the language is maintained in the home.²⁹ The Milles Lacs Band of Ojibwe has already prioritized increasing parental involvement for expanding and improving its language program.³⁰

Aside from the cultural and social benefits described above, recent research on bilingualism and multilingualism has demonstrated increased cognition in second language learners.³¹ Research has also been conducted on Indigenous language revitalization efforts. The Kanaka Maoli language revitalization movement in Hawaii has made important scientific contributions to our understanding of the effects of bilingualism on children’s cognitive development. Hawaiian researchers have demonstrated that learning an Indigenous language can even enhance children’s language skills in English. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology has confirmed the Hawaiian research results by showing that brain development in bilingual children outperforms those of unilingual children.³² Therefore, learning an Indigenous language will not hinder, but will actually facilitate better learning outcomes for Indigenous children even in the dominant state language.

²⁹ Leanne Hinton and Kenneth L. Hale, *The Green Book of Language Revitalization In Practice* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2001), 10.

³⁰ Janine Ja no's Bowen, *Excellence in Tribal Governance - An Honoring Nations Case Study: The Ojibwe Language Program: Teaching Mille Lacs Band Youth the Ojibwe Language to Foster a Stronger Sense of Cultural Identity and Sovereignty*, Harvard (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, 2004), 16.

³¹ Patricia A. Duff, "Heritage Language Education in Canada," in *Heritage Language Education - A New Field Emerging*, 71-90 (New York: Routledge, 2008), 76-77.

³² Mark Abley, *Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 81.

Such research on the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism is crucial to overturning ancient prejudices and other misconceptions surrounding language diversity. Disdain for linguistic diversity has ancient roots in Western thought according to the Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel when God punished humans by taking away their common language and replacing it with mutually incomprehensible ones.³³ Suspicion of multilingualism is lethal to all heritage language revitalization efforts, especially in North America where linguistic homogenization has been politicized as a way of assimilating new immigrant populations and colonizing Indigenous peoples. This assimilative aspect to language education continues today as only two languages, both European in origin, have official recognition throughout Canada. The Canadian federal government has promoted official bilingualism in English and French through a range of policies that include mandatory interpretation and translation as well as preferential hiring practices for civil servants.³⁴

³³ Basil Johnston shares a similar Anishinaabe account of language diversity as punishment for humankind's failings in his first book, *Ojibway Heritage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 50-52. Johnston writes that people and animals once shared a common language but it was "this mutual understanding that enabled man to impose greater burdens upon his brothers."

Instead of doing his own fishing, man dispatched a loon or a kingfisher to catch fish for him. If he wanted a rabbit, man would send an eagle or a hawk; if he wanted a partridge, he would send a fox; if he wanted the sap of trees, he ordered the woodpecker to drill holes in the trees for him; if he wanted a new lodge, he commanded the beaver and the porcupine to fell the trees. The animals did all the work; man did none.

The animals organized and chose strike action to "withhold our labours". Bear decreed, *To make it difficult for man to enslave us again, no longer will we speak the same language. Instead we shall speak in different languages. From now on we shall live to ourselves, for ourselves. Let men learn to fend for themselves without our help.*

³⁴ A recent development is the promotion of Inuktitut in Nunavut since 1999 since the territory was created and its government committed to promoting the Inuit language as an official language of commerce, education, and government.

Fortunately, Indigenous peoples do have academic allies who are attempting to resist linguistic homogenization. Three anthropologists, Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Whorf, were among the first proponents of linguistic determinism and linguistic relativity. Linguistic determinism argues, “the way one thinks is determined by the language one speaks” while linguistic relativity concludes, “differences among languages must therefore be reflected in the differences of the worldviews of the speakers.”³⁵ Both linguistic determinism and linguistic relativity imply that language loss leads to a generational breakdown in the transmission of understanding what it means to be Anishinaabe. Linguistic determinism and linguistic relativity are contested concepts within linguistics and their assertion is widespread, but not universal, among Indigenous peoples.

One of the most ardent proponents of linguistic determinism’s assertion, that language structures thought, is Mi’kmaq scholar Marie Battiste. “For Indigenous researchers, there is much to be gained by seeking the soul of their peoples in their languages. Non-Indigenous researchers must learn Indigenous languages to understand Indigenous worldviews.”³⁶ She condemns the “Eurocentric illusion of benign translatability” that English can replace Indigenous languages, and that Indigenous worldviews can be understood in European

³⁵ Zdenek Salzman, *Language, Culture, and Society: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 42.

³⁶ Marie Battiste, “Research Ethics for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage,” in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, 497-509 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 504.

languages.³⁷ I agree that intellectuals, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, should prioritize working in Indigenous languages when working on Indigenous topics, and I admire Battiste's emphasis on this point that links Indigenous languages to Indigenous scholarship. However, she takes a hyperbolic turn when she equates Indigenous peoples working in English to self-colonization.

*Linguistic competence is a requisite for research in Indigenous issues. Researchers cannot rely on colonial languages to define Indigenous reality. If Indigenous people continue to define their reality in terms and constructs drawn from Eurocentric diffusionism, they continue the pillage of their own selves.*³⁸

To equate working in English or other colonizing languages to “self-pillaging” denigrates the work of almost all Indigenous scholars, and makes Battiste's criticism (written in English) seem somewhat hypocritical. The vast majority of Indigenous scholars write and theorize about colonization in English instead of their Indigenous languages. I would counter that such statements are another example of “blaming the victim” that serve to obscure rather than clarify the colonial structures and systems that continue to marginalize Indigenous peoples.³⁹

³⁷ Marie Ann Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (Saskatoon: Purich, 2000), 79-82.

³⁸ Battiste, "Research Ethics for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage," 504.

³⁹ This point has been made more generally to the fundamentalist discourse surrounding cultural revitalization in an essay by Cree scholar Verna St. Denis.

Cultural revitalization for Aboriginal peoples is a double-edged sword. On one hand it is liberating because it challenges the goals of colonization that eradicate the cultural practices and identities of Aboriginal peoples. But on the other hand, it proposes new and difficult, and perhaps misplaced, emphasis on finding and restoring our cultural traditions and practices. Cultural revitalization can also have the effect of encouraging cultural authenticity and cultural purity in a fundamentalist manner. Through encouraging Aboriginal peoples to seek out and perform authenticity as compensation for our exploitation and oppression, cultural revitalization becomes oppressive itself; in fact, it becomes a form of 'blaming the victim.' "Real Indians: Cultural Revitalization and Fundamentalism in Aboriginal

Can we be Anishinaabeg if we do not speak Anishinaabemowin? This is a difficult question that arises from the “benign translatability” challenge of linguistic determinists such as Battiste. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to definitively answer this question, but the identity-language connection is impossible to ignore.⁴⁰ In Canada, language is politically explosive, and has been through much of the country’s history, as Anglophones and Francophones have struggled to coexist in a single state. In the United States, the English-only movement has generated controversy through its resistance to English-Spanish bilingualism that accommodates the large Hispanic population. Citizenship, identity and language are inextricably connected and Indigenous peoples are already grappling with questions of citizenship and cultural rights and responsibilities. In the following section, I introduce a helpful paradigm that has enabled me to work through the determinist challenge for the purposes of this study.

Peoplehood as an Indigenous Research Paradigm

The Tsalagi (Cherokee) scholar Robert Thomas developed a model to understand the sources of resilience that enabled some Indigenous peoples to

Education," in *Contesting Fundamentalisms*, 35-47 (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 2004), 45.

⁴⁰ However, there is also evidence that counters Battiste’s claim that language and worldview are inseparable and other Indigenous people have expressed concern, that, in the specific case of Indigenous language revitalization, language and worldview have been decoupled. For example, in 2001 community Elders expressed their dismay that the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwes’ language program was teaching students the language, but failing to develop Anishinaabe values and worldview. Bowen, *Excellence in Tribal Governance*, 13-14. Another topical example that complicates the linguistic determinist position is the manner in which Indigenous knowledge, values, and worldviews have been effectively conveyed in European languages whenever Indigenous peoples have employed European concepts to advocate effectively for their communities.

survive colonization. In his essay, "The Tap-Roots of Peoplehood," Thomas identifies four tap-roots of peoplehood as the requisite components for a people to survive colonization: land, language, religion, and sacred history. Tsalagi and Creek scholar Tom Holm and his co-authors, Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis, have since added conceptually to Thomas's model by substituting the phrase "ceremonial cycles" for "religion" to more closely reflect an Indigenous understanding of spirituality. The resultant "peoplehood matrix" or model, of ceremonies, land, language, and sacred history provides a framework in which Indigenous communities can analyze the present state of their communities, and reflect upon future prospects for sustainability as distinct peoples. Holm, Pearson and Chavis seek to resolve the lack of a "central paradigm," and express concern that this complicates American Indian Studies' status as an independent discipline.⁴¹ The authors adopt Thomas's universal matrix for all Indigenous peoples, and suggest it "could serve as the primary theoretical underpinning of indigenous peoples studies."⁴² The authors hope that by reconceptualizing sovereignty according to peoplehood, their model legitimizes peoples and delegitimizes states as sovereign entities.⁴³

⁴¹ Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson and Ben Chavis, "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Spring 2003: 8.

⁴² Holm et al., "Peoplehood," 12.

⁴³ Holm et al., "Peoplehood," 17.

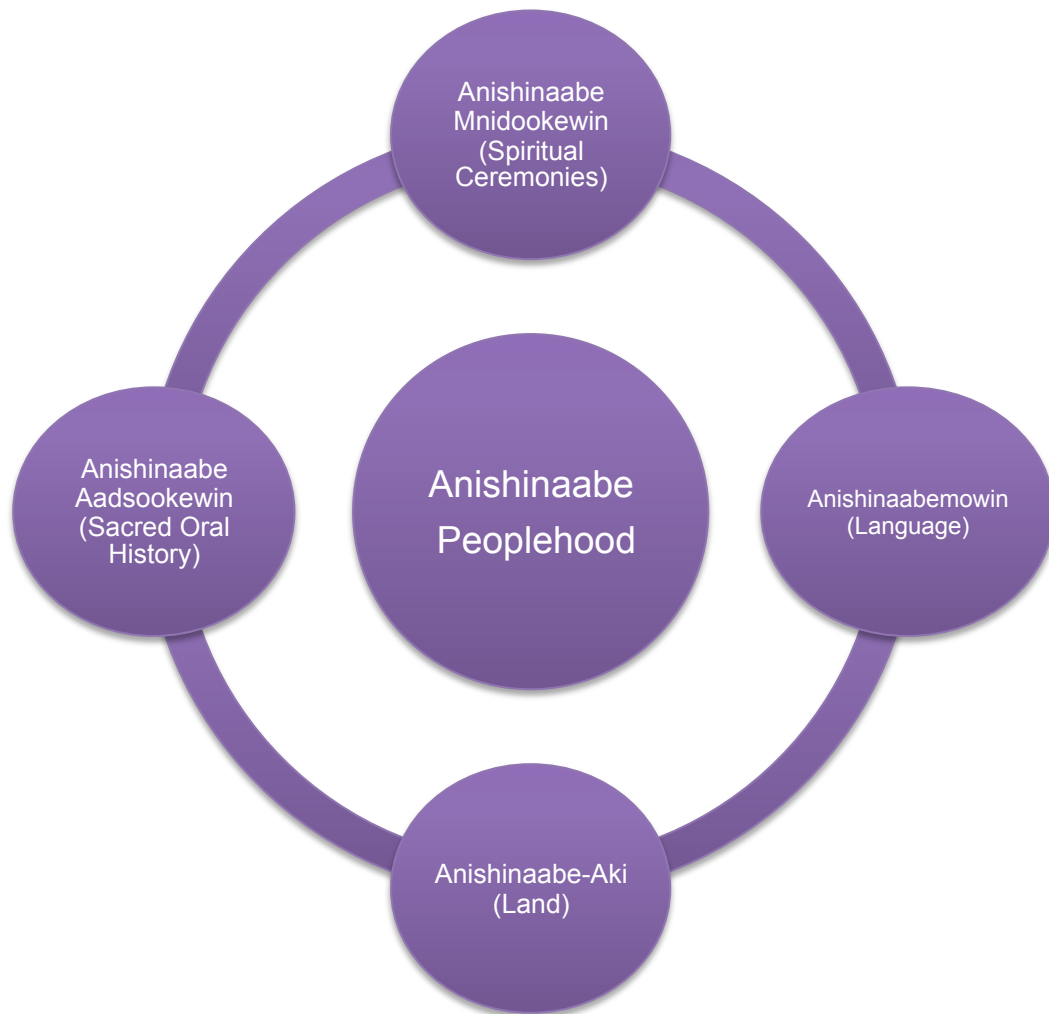


Figure 1.2. Anishinaabe Peoplehood

The tap-roots of peoplehood should not be considered a checklist or a measurement of Indigeneity. The enormous damage that colonization has already wrought would be intensified if Thomas’s work was misused to target perceived deficiencies. In *A Recognition of Being – Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, author Kim Anderson warns against ossifying tradition to establish fundamentalist notions of what it means to be Indigenous. “For those of us who have lost so much, these traditional lifestyles, values, customs and languages might serve us better if we see them as ideals and tools with which we reconcile

our Native lives as they have come to be.”⁴⁴ This is an interesting choice of words, however, because Anderson advises, “we reconcile” our assimilated state and re-frame our traditions to “serve us better.” I find this approach individualistic and self-serving, rather than being rooted in Anishinaabe values of respect and responsibility. Anderson’s approach has a subtle but significant difference from what Holm, Pearson, and Chavis emphasize in that the peoplehood matrix is intended as an “aspiration rather than a recognized present reality.”⁴⁵ The recovery of ceremonies, land, language and sacred history represents an Indigenous future to which Indigenous people can aspire; not measurements, or worse still, ways to intellectually justify, our failures as colonized individuals or as colonized peoples.

Anishinaabe author Richard Wagamese poignantly personalizes colonization’s impact and the resulting reductionist conceptions of what it means to be Indigenous in his book *for Joshua – An Ojibway Father Teaches His Son*. The book’s narrative is Wagamese’s extended apology for his absence during his son’s childhood. His writing captures and critiques the longing that many Indigenous peoples feel for a now-mythical past when our people were united and free from the destruction wrought by colonization.

We all crave, as deeply as any thirst, a return to those tribal fires where the people gathered in one small band...when we lived in harmony, balance, brotherhood, and belonging... We’ve felt that fire slowly die in our communities. We’ve watched its light fade, its warmth disperse, and its embers lose their spark.

And that is what we mourn.

⁴⁴ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000), 27.

⁴⁵ Holm et al., “Peoplehood,” 10.

From that mourning comes a staunch desire. A desire to re-create it all. To rebuild it... We go to great lengths sometimes to make it real for ourselves. We go to great lengths to fan those dying embers, to stroke those flames back to life, to chase away the night. In our cultural lives we insist that real Indians know how to sing and dance and drum. In our traditional lives we insist that real Indians attend every ceremony, make every offering, possess all the medicines, and speak our languages... We insist on all of this because we have seen how quickly things can disappear into the night and we need everyone to fan the dying embers of those tribal fires. We don't want to lose any more of ourselves, so we get tough on each other, demand that we all be what we believe everyone needs to be to stay strong, to live, to survive. We don't want to grieve the loss of another part of ourselves.⁴⁶

Indigenous peoples are haunted by this awareness of what we have lost through colonization. Wagamese believes that unresolved grief, rooted in colonization's devastating impact on his childhood, prevented him from fulfilling his traditional role as a father and mentor to his son.

That is why it is so hard to be considered a real Indian in this world – because it's easier to calm someone's anger than it is to heal someone's sadness or to fill a lonely need. It's only natural, I suppose, for someone carrying the crushing inner burden of loneliness to do whatever it takes to make it go away. ... When our people tell each other that they need to do this, they need to act this way, they need to wear this, to be seen here or seen there, they are speaking from that loneliness. They are trying to recreate that tribal life today, trying to rebuild it, make it vital and alive again.⁴⁷

This tension between conserving and creating, described above by Wagamese, is a great challenge for all revitalization movements. Seneca scholar John Mohawk wrote a history of revitalization movements, *Utopian Legacies – A History of Conquest and Oppression in the Western World*, in which he recognizes their creative and destructive potential. Mohawk sees

⁴⁶ Richard Wagamese, *for Joshua – An Ojibway Father Teaches His Son* (Toronto, ON: Anchor Canada, 2003), 221-2.

⁴⁷ Wagamese, *for Joshua*, 223-224.

revitalization movements as “the creative energy of cultures” but he warns of their tendency to become intolerant and oppressive forces.⁴⁸ Mohawk defines one as a “phenomenon among oppressed peoples that can spark movement for social change...when it mobilizes significant numbers of people. ... Adherents of revitalization movements imagine their improved society or future utopia as a condition that must be created through their own vision and efforts.”⁴⁹ Indigenous language revitalization movements clearly fall under Mohawk’s definitions.

Other scholars have identified this conservative yet creative tension in Indigenous revitalization movements. Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle allow that “cultural revival” leads to “the fundamental problem of determining a contemporary expression of tribal identity and behaving according to its dictates.”⁵⁰ How do we conserve what we need, yet also adapt, change, and create when we must? Indigenous peoples have the power to regenerate and reorganize in new ways, and it is in this spirit that I suggest that Anishinaabeg can enhance our survival prospects by using the peoplehood model to envision a powerful presence for our peoples throughout our territories – both on- and off-reserve. The peoplehood matrix emphasizes balance between the four tap-roots of ceremonies, land, language, and sacred history. It does not reduce a people’s resilience or purpose to a single aspect of their being that could contribute to intolerance. For example, one of the most sacred stories in Anishinaabe oral tradition is our migration epic, which exemplifies our adaptability and resilience

⁴⁸ John C. Mohawk, *Utopian Legacies - A History of Conquest and Oppression in the Western World* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 2000), 25.

⁴⁹ Mohawk, *Utopian Legacies*, 5.

⁵⁰ Vine Jr. Deloria and Clifford Lytle, *The Nations Within – The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 254.

as a people to recreate ourselves in new spaces while remaining rooted in Anishinaabe tradition and values.⁵¹ It is in this spirit that revitalization movements can resist colonization's extinguishment of Indigenous peoples, whether actual or conceptual, while remaining aware of their potential to also inflict intolerance and oppression.

Will the Anishinaabeg survive or perish as a people? Wagamese writes that we can connect to and maintain the ancient spirit of our people even though we will never be the same as we were prior to colonization. "We can recreate the spirit of community we had, of kinship, or relationship to all things, of union with the land, harmony with the universe, balance in living, humility, honesty, truth, and wisdom in all of our dealings with each other."⁵² Identifying ourselves as peoples is crucial to our survival because it is our peoplehood that will be our legacy to our descendants, including those who we will never meet in our lifetime. Building a strong foundation for future generations is a tremendous responsibility. If we neglect our connections and responsibilities to land, language, ceremonies, and sacred history, we fail each other now and for generations to come.

Sadly, the tap-root of intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages is clearly weakening. The 2005 *Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures* in Canada showed that although the majority of off-reserve First Nations people wish to learn, only nine percent of their

⁵¹ Edward Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book - The Voice of the Ojibway* (St. Paul, MN: The Red School House, 1988), 94-102.

⁵² Wagamese, *for Joshua*, 224.

children have conversational fluency.⁵³ These dismal fluency rates demonstrate that urban communities are struggling to maintain this crucial aspect of their peoplehood. My focus on language is not intended to privilege language as more important than the other tap-roots. Holm, Pearson, and Chavis emphasize this point in their own example of the interconnections between the four tap-roots.

For example, linguistic studies are extremely important to the preservation of a group's identity, but what can linguistic studies do beyond writing grammar books, compiling a complete dictionary, creating a pedagogy for teaching the language, or making tapes of Native speakers? Does the creation of these projects open up new areas of study or, from a practical point of view, effectively end scholarly inquiry? The answer to those questions lies in emphasizing the linkages between language, place, ceremony, and history. Practically anyone can learn a Native language, but without understanding of its intricacies and its nuances in terms of preserving and passing along the knowledge of the people who speak it, the language is rendered useless. Language is not primary, it is simply an equal part of the matrix.⁵⁴

Although there seems to be widespread consensus on the importance of maintaining and revitalizing Indigenous languages, there is uncertainty on how and under what conditions Indigenous languages should be maintained and revitalized. One example relates to literacy. Basil Johnston has been a proponent of recording Anishinaabe cultural heritage in written form, and is the author of *Anishinaubae Thesaurus*. In its preface, Johnston laments the lack of literature available in the language, and he identifies the lack of a universally recognized orthography, or writing system, as a principal factor. "There are so

⁵³ Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, *Towards a New Beginning: A Foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures - Report to the Minister of Canadian Heritage* (Ottawa: Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures (Canada), 2005), 36-37.

⁵⁴ Holm et al., "Peoplehood," 19.

many orthographers, so many systems, so many dictionaries, but there is nothing, sad to relate, to read. ... Above all, if there are no texts, novels, histories, storybooks, songs, prayers, poems, and dramas to read, there is not much point in developing spellers and orthographic systems."⁵⁵

The recording of oral stories in written form has launched a small but growing body of literature that is written in Anishinaabemowin: Anton Treuer's *Living our Language* provides Elders' stories written in Anishinaabemowin with English translations and commentary;⁵⁶ Rand Valentine's rewriting of linguist Leonard Bloomfield's study of Andrew Medler's stories;⁵⁷ and John Nichols' rewriting of Bloomfield's similar study of Angeline Williams' stories.⁵⁸ A tension does exist over whether such efforts distract or even complicate the continuation of oral traditions by pitting "nationalists...who view literacy as crucial to survival of the traditional culture and an indication of their language's equal value with English...[versus] traditionalists who reject a written form of the indigenous language as an alien imposition."⁵⁹ Despite such fears of cultural distortion, many Anishinaabeg are writing in Anishinaabemowin. Shirley Williams, an acclaimed Anishinaabe language advocate and teacher, explains that it is imperative that Anishinaabemowin literacy be taught.

⁵⁵ Johnston, *Anishinaubae Thesaurus*, vii, xi.

⁵⁶ Treuer, *Living Our Language*.

⁵⁷ Andrew Medler and Rand Valentine, *Weshki-Bmaadzijig Ji-Noonmowaad: 'That the young might hear': The Stories of Andrew Medler as Recorded* (London, ON: University of Western Ontario, 1999).

⁵⁸ Leonard Bloomfield and John D. Nichols, *The Dog's Children: Anishinaabe Texts Told by Angeline Williams* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

⁵⁹ Brian Bielenberg, "Indigenous Language Codification: Cultural Effects," in *Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium* (Louisville, KY: Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium, 1998), 103-104.

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.⁶⁰

Moreover, a living language and culture naturally evolves; the written form of a language existing in combination with oral stories is common in most societies. Trying to stay “traditional” simply for the sake of authenticity could work against revitalization. It is in this spirit that Basil Johnston, Anton Treuer, Rand Valentine, Shirley Williams, and others are making their scholarship more accessible to Anishinaabeg in the hope that the texts may help revitalize the use of Anishinaabemowin.

Canadian Aboriginal Education Policy and Indigenous Languages

All Indigenous languages have been harmed by assimilative education policies. The past four decades have seen significant changes in Indigenous education, but these changes have only stemmed the tide of language decline. In 1973, the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) succeeded in wresting limited control of on-reserve schooling from the Department of Indian Affairs. The “Indian Control of Indian Education” era that followed successfully stopped the worst abuses of assimilative education, but Indigenous language use continued to decline.

In response to the looming crisis of language loss, the NIB’s successor, the Assembly of First Nations, released two studies demanding federal funding and support for Indigenous languages in the early 1990s. As a result of First

⁶⁰ Shirley Williams, "The Development of Ojibway Language Materials," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* (University of Alberta) 27, no. 1 (2003): 79-80.

Nations' lobbying efforts, the challenge of reversing Indigenous language loss gradually emerged as a priority for Indigenous education. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) Final Report, released in 1996, identified Aboriginal languages as a priority for cultural heritage preservation and called on all levels of government to prioritize Aboriginal language revitalization.

The Canadian government was slow to respond to the RCAP's recommendations on language restoration, but Indigenous peoples also moved independently to build institutional support for their work. In 1998, the federal government launched its Aboriginal Languages Initiative (ALI) with an annual funding commitment of only \$5 million for four years. This completely inadequate sum resulted in approximately \$2200 being allocated to each band in Canada, which is only a small fraction of a single teacher's salary.⁶¹ The Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI) was established in 1999 to provide "professional development for First Nations people as they struggle to stabilize their languages and provide effective language programs in communities throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan."⁶² CILLDI now offers academic and professional development courses for Indigenous language advocates and teachers each summer.

In 2002, the federal government announced a 10-year, \$160 million replacement program funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage to

⁶¹ Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, *Report*, 102. The Report had at least one major oversight as well. Although Elders raised the importance of preschool immersion or language nests in their consultation (60), the Elders' request was ignored and not included in the Task Force's 25 recommendations.

⁶² Heather A. Blair, Donna Paskemin and Barbara Laderoute, "Preparing Indigenous Language Advocates, Teachers, and Researchers in Western Canada," in *Nurturing Native Languages*, 93-104 (Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University, 2003), 95.

revitalize Indigenous languages. In the summer of 2005, a federally-funded Aboriginal Languages Task Force announced its recommendations on how the federal government should establish and organize language revitalization programs. The Task Force's *Report* included recommendations for increased federal funding as well as the establishment of itself as a permanent "Languages and Cultures Council." This proposal to centralize federal funding of Indigenous language projects in a new Languages and Cultures Council seemed self-serving and unnecessary as the RCAP *Report* deliberately avoided recommending such large-scale language planning measures because they have been shown to not contribute significantly to Indigenous language restoration.⁶³ The Task Force's *Report*, at the cost of \$2.5 million, met the same fate as RCAP; it was ignored and quickly shelved by the federal government.

Any existing momentum by the federal government towards addressing Indigenous languages loss was lost in November 2006 when the recently elected Conservative government slashed funding for Indigenous language programs. Prime Minister Harper, at a time when the federal treasury was bursting with record multi-billion dollar surpluses, decided to eliminate \$110 million from the \$160 million dedicated to Indigenous languages. These cuts turned the clock

⁶³ "The Commission has been urged to recommend that Aboriginal languages be used in educational institutions from primary school to college, that they be given official language status, and that they be used at all levels of government. However, sociolinguists who have studied language loss and efforts to stop it generally agree that action must originate at the community level and be directed to those who can assure intergenerational transmission." Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report - Volume 3: Gathering Strength*, 614.

back to the ALI funding levels of just \$5 million per year for the following five years.⁶⁴

I spent ten long months working in Ottawa on Parliament Hill from 2002 to 2003, and that misadventure convinced me that Indigenous priorities will always remain peripheral to Canada's political elites. I believe that it is illogical for Indigenous peoples to rely on the main perpetrators of assimilation policy, Canada and the United States, to undo the damage that its residential schools, reserve policy, and imposition of the *Indian Act* band council system have done. Assimilation policy has created the existing conditions for Indigenous language death, and continued government neglect for Indigenous language revitalization demonstrates that Canada does not consider even the maintenance of Indigenous languages to be worthwhile. Waiting for the Canadian government to act, and thereby failing to take responsibility to protect and pass on ancestral languages, is a derogation of responsibility to our ancestors.

Language revitalization is often resource-intensive work, but the cited inadequacy of federal funding for Indigenous languages suggests that successful maintenance and revitalization cannot be dependent upon Canada or its Aboriginal organizations. The meager federal budget allocation of \$5 million for Indigenous language initiatives is a pittance compared to the enormous need for

⁶⁴ Along with the cancellation of the Kelowna Accord, the cuts to Aboriginal language funding has led to accusations that the Conservatives are punishing prominent First Nations politicians who publicly supported the then-ruling Liberal Party in the 2006 election. If true, then funding for the urgent task of Indigenous language revitalization is a casualty of the political intrigue between the national Aboriginal organizations and Canadian political parties.

action.⁶⁵ Lack of resources and lack of time present serious challenges, because teachers, teaching aids, and texts are expensive and time-consuming to develop. The dwindling number of language speakers also experience substantial demands for their time that interfere with their ability to pass on their languages.⁶⁶ These pressures include employment, as well as mostly well-meaning, but misguided, attempts to document a cultural and linguistic collapse rather than to ensure its “continued transmission.”⁶⁷

The existing language revitalization literature emphasizes that urgency necessitates self-sufficiency and independence from external funding. Blackfeet language activist Darrell Kipp is adamant that this must be the case and insists on financial independence for the Piegan Institute - a private immersion school established without any tribal council or federal funding that is a widely-cited beacon of hope for other Indigenous language revitalizationists.⁶⁸ A crucial factor for consideration in this study is whether Anishinaabemowin revitalization projects have the capacity to operate independently of government funding for long-term viability. Non-institutionalized forms of adult language learning have been deliberately sought out in order to catalogue creative pedagogies that could be implemented when funding is limited.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, *Report*, 103.

⁶⁶ Abley, *Spoken Here*, 119.

⁶⁷ Paul Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 145.

⁶⁸ Darrell R. Kipp, *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, 2000).

⁶⁹ There are many possible approaches to language revitalization with a massive literature on second language teaching - one of the most helpful and thorough sources

Language Revitalization, Indigenous Governance, and Social Movements

This research intends to contribute both to Anishinaabemowin revitalization, and to the collective efforts of Indigenous peoples to decolonize and indigenize our lives by studying our conscious efforts to resist cultural and linguistic assimilation. In his 1957 book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Albert Memmi analyzed the French colonization of North Africa and observed that, “the most urgent claim of any group about to revive is certainly the liberation and restoration of its language.”⁷⁰ He explained how the imposition of a language of empire oppresses colonized peoples and turns them into “foreigners” in their own land.

*If only the mother tongue was allowed some influence on current social life, or was used across the counters of government offices, or directed the postal service; but this is not the case. The entire bureaucracy, the entire court system, all industry hears and uses the colonizer's language. Likewise, highway markings, railroad station signs, street signs and receipts make the colonized feel like a foreigner in his own country.*⁷¹

Memmi witnessed how this public devaluing of an Indigenous language affects its speakers' ability to maintain it.

*It has no stature in the country or in the concert of peoples. If [the colonized] wants to obtain a job, make a place for himself, exist in the community and the world, he must first bow to the language of his masters. In the linguistic conflict within the colonized, his mother tongue is that which is crushed. He himself sets about discarding this infirm language, hiding it from the sight of strangers.*⁷²

Memmi believed that language restoration would also restore the history of the colonized.

of techniques for revitalizing endangered languages are the fourteen listed by linguist Tsunoda, *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization*, 200-215.

⁷⁰ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized - Expanded Edition* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1991), 110.

⁷¹ Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 106-107.

⁷² Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 107.

*In recovering his autonomous and separate destiny, [the colonized] immediately goes back to his own tongue. ... To this self-discovery movement of an entire people must be returned the most appropriate tool; that which finds the shortest path to the soul, because it comes directly from it. That path is words of love and tenderness, anger and indignation...*⁷³

The framing of Anishinaabemowin revitalization as an Indigenous social movement draws upon two Indigenous scholars who emphasize the links between language and Indigenous social movements: Taiaiake Alfred and Linda Tuhiwai Smith. 'Kanien'kehaka' (Mohawk) political scientist Taiaiake Alfred proposes, "speaking and using Onkwehonwe languages to reorganize and reframe our existences is perhaps the most radical act we can perform as Onkwehonwe warriors."⁷⁴ Alfred stresses the importance of language for decolonization by predicting that it will be those with the ability to "shape ideas, translate, and create language [who] will be essential to the process of decolonization."⁷⁵

Linda Tuhiwai Smith is Maori, and the author of *Decolonizing Methodologies*, in which she offers several decolonizing Indigenous projects related to language revitalization: claiming, story-telling, celebrating survival, intervening, connecting, writing, envisioning, reframing, naming, protecting and sharing.⁷⁶ Smith explains that Indigenous language revitalization has far-

⁷³ Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 134.

⁷⁴ Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: indigenous pathways of action and freedom* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005), 181.

⁷⁵ Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace Power Righteousness - An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1999), 142.

⁷⁶ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999), Chapter 8.

reaching effects and a language revitalization social movement is already underway.

*The cultural and linguistic revitalization movements have tapped into a set of cultural resources that have recentred the roles of indigenous women, of elders, and of groups who have been marginalized through various colonial practices. These groups in the community were often the groups who had retained 'traditional' practices, had been taught by elders, were fluent in the language and had specialized knowledge pertaining to the land, the spiritual belief systems and the customary lore of the community.*⁷⁷

Based on her work with Maori language nests,⁷⁸ Smith observes that language movements can restore balance to Indigenous communities because those who have maintained Indigenous languages are overwhelmingly kin who are elderly and who maintain a traditional lifestyle. For Anishinaabeg, no relationship is more venerated than those with Elders who guide, mentor, and teach. Revitalizing Indigenous languages restores these relationships to prominence, because those of us who no longer speak must seek out the dwindling number of fluent speakers. Learning our languages venerates our Elders and their ancestral wisdom. It also reconnects us with our families and communities and reminds us of our connections to our territories, because of the

⁷⁷ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 111.

⁷⁸ Maori and Kanaka Maoli revitalization projects that used "language nests" or language-immersion preschools for their children. Smith cites the language nest movement as one of the three most crucial components of the Maori resurgence since the 1960s. The Te Kohanga Reo is representative of the enormous potential of Indigenous social movements that are based on autonomy, kinship, and language:

Te Kohanga Reo...was built on the more fundamental unit of whanau or extended family...[and] did not depend on iwi [tribal] structures for its credibility or financial support. Te Kohanga Reo...encouraged autonomy amongst its individual units. A consequence of such autonomy is that there was space for whanau to solve problems for themselves and this process generated a wide range of activities, one of which was information gathering. It was also a process which committed parents to thinking far more seriously about education and the relationship between schooling and society. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 163.

richness of Indigenous lexicons for describing kinship and the natural world. In sum, it reminds us of the best of what it means to be Anishinaabe.

According to Alfred, this type of societal transformation requires “a culturally rooted *social* movement that transforms the whole of society and a political action that seeks to remake the entire landscape of power and relationship to reflect truly a liberated post-imperial vision.”⁷⁹ Other scholars share Alfred and Smith’s belief that an Indigenous social movement is necessary to revitalize Indigenous languages. Language scholars James Crawford and Joshua Fishman both see social movements as crucial to reversing language shift to English. Crawford explains that the next step towards self-determination requires a rejection of Western values of individualism, materialism, and pragmatism in favour of traditional Indigenous values.

*How do fundamental changes in values occur? With difficulty...[e]ither individuals’ lives change in radical ways, or they experience a spiritual conversion, or they are influenced by a social movement that speaks directly to long-suppressed needs and aspirations. In the case of language revitalization, I believe a social movement will be necessary, one that addresses questions that matter to Native Americans. This will most likely occur in the context of struggles for self-determination: cultural, economic, and perhaps political as well.*⁸⁰

Fishman identifies the importance of social movements in his landmark book, *Reversing Language Shift*. Fishman uses the phrase “Reversing Language Shift” (RLS) to refer to all activities that seek to bolster endangered languages. He deplores the lack of scholarly attention on language revitalization and blames social scientists for failing to recognize RLS actors as social movements.

⁷⁹ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 27.

⁸⁰ James Crawford, *At War With Diversity: US Language Policy in an Age of Anxiety* (Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2000), 78.

It is no exaggeration to say that millions of people throughout the world are consciously engaged in efforts to reverse language shift and that many hundreds of thousands do so as members of movements whose explicit goal is RLS. Yet the efforts of these millions and the goals of these hundreds of thousands have been relatively little mentioned in the social science literature and have remained only infrequently referred to even in the sociolinguistic literature. Part of the reason for this ethically unjustified and intellectually as well as practically disappointing state of affairs, it seems to me, is that both the social sciences as a whole and sociolinguistics in its own right have sliced up their treatments of social movements in general, and reformatory or protest social movements in particular, in such a way that RLS never clearly appears as the distinctive phenomenon that it is.⁸¹

Alfred, Crawford, Fishman and Smith share the view that successfully revitalizing Indigenous languages requires Indigenous-led social movements. This study sought out those who are actively pursuing Anishinaabemowin revitalization and challenging Canadian cultural and linguistic assimilation, and explored the ways in which Anishinaabemowin activists constitute an existing or potential Indigenous social movement. Other Indigenous peoples, such as the Maori and Kanaka Maoli, have made tremendous progress in their own language revitalization efforts, and comparing our progress with theirs may yield potential paths we have yet to take.⁸² Documenting Anishinaabe efforts may in turn offer lessons for other Indigenous peoples who are revitalizing their languages.

Research Methodology and Rationale

This interdisciplinary dissertation describes and analyzes Anishinaabe efforts to rekindle and restore their ancient language by promoting, speaking and teaching Anishinaabemowin throughout their ancestral territory. Qualitative methods

⁸¹ Joshua A. Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1991), 381.

⁸² Jon Allan Reyhner, *Contemporary Native American Issues: Education and Language Restoration* (Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House, 2006), 59-65.

including autoethnography, individual interviews, and a group interview with language activists and teachers, explore Anishinaabemowin revitalization to derive useful lessons and models that can be disseminated throughout Anishinaabe-aki. Anishinaabeg have launched mostly uncoordinated language maintenance and revitalization initiatives including immersion daycares, preschools, primary schools, and adult immersion programs. Numerous regional language camps, conferences, and workshops occur throughout the year with the largest being the annual Anishinaabemowin Teg conference hosted by the Sault Tribe of Chippewas in Michigan. A significant amount of language material has also been produced by language teachers such as Basil Johnston, Mary Ann Naokwegijig-Corbiere, Pat Ningewance Nadeau, Isadore Toulouse, and Shirley Williams, among others.

Adult language programming is my primary focus because it is adults, not children, who determine which language will be used at home. Even Indigenous language revitalization efforts that target children often falter due to a lack of fluent adult speakers. The problem arises when parents who do not speak the target language at home raise children who attend immersion programs in a target language. In their global survey of language revitalization, linguists Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley advocate that adult language education must be included in any effective language revitalization program.

The advantages to teaching the adult generation first are multifold. First, it requires a critical mass of people within a community to take responsibility for learning the language, and it means that the adults are the ones who create domains for language usage. Thus when the children learn the local language, they will find the need to use it already built in. Another advantage to teaching the adults first is that they are then in the position of

*being the language teachers and can assume what may be perceived as the more traditional or natural role as instructors, teaching the language 'naturally' to their children. This approach also helps alleviate the potential problems of creating a lost middle generation, a situation which occurs when the parent generation does not speak the local language but the elders (grandparents) and children do.*⁸³

Since adults determine the language spoken in the home, it is imperative that parents maintain Anishinaabemowin as their primary language, if language revitalization is to be sustainable and if its intergenerational transmission is to be restored.⁸⁴

There is a gap in the research on adult Indigenous language teaching and learning that this dissertation seeks to help fill by accurately describing how adult Anishinaabeg recover and restore their language. I also draw on previous scholarship on Indigenous language revitalization to describe and analyze existing Anishinaabemowin revitalization projects. Documented successes can be replicated to create a network of autonomous language revitalization projects dedicated to Indigenous resurgence.

The Researcher

I am an Anishinaabe who has spent most of my life in the city and only began to learn my ancestral language, Anishinaabemowin, as an adult. Like the majority of urban Indigenous, I did not choose to abandon my language. Rather, the governments of Canada and the United States silenced Indigenous languages in education systems that were designed to assimilate me, and all Indigenous of North America. I began learning Nahkaawewin, also known as Saukteaux (Plains

⁸³ Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley, *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 57.

⁸⁴ Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, 395.

dialect of Anishinaabemowin) in 1999 in an elective course at university, and was struck by the paucity of infrastructure and resources for Indigenous languages. Our textbooks, audiotapes, and other course materials were outmatched by those available for French and Spanish. The contrast was starker when I considered other language activities. Spanish language instruction was readily available – even in Canada – with university and community language programs for all learning levels. For the local Indigenous languages of Nehiyawewin (Plains Cree or “Y” dialect) and Nahkaawewin this was not the case. Although the Cree and Saulteaux communities far outnumbered the local Hispanic communities in our city, we had no Indigenous heritage language programs.

As the first generation of my family who does not speak our ancestral language fluently, I feel a personal responsibility to re-establish a link that dates back thousands of years. My mother, Mary-ban Pitawanakwat, was a fluent speaker of Anishinaabemowin who was raised on the Whitefish River Indian Reserve on Birch Island, Ontario. Although she did not attend residential school, she was sent to an integrated English public school where assimilative pressures were in many respects equal to, or even greater, than those at the coercive residential schools. She retained her language because she was fortunate to have been raised until she was six years old by her maternal grandparents, where Anishinaabemowin was the only language spoken at home.

My sister and I were born and raised in the prairie provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in a single-parent household where English was used almost exclusively. Living approximately 2,000 Km from our reserve resulted in few

opportunities to interact with our community and extended family. Close to my hometown of Regina, Saskatchewan, there are reserves where the Nahkaawewin dialect was spoken, and my mother could converse with the local speakers of the language. My memories of hearing the language spoken are mainly from her early morning phone conversations to family back home in Ontario, or from rare but treasured visits by our grandmother Susan Cywink-ban and great-grandmother Margaret Pitawanakwat-ban.

My first educational experience learning another language involved not Anishinaabemowin, but French. Bilingualism in Canada refers almost exclusively to the two colonial languages: English and French.⁸⁵ My mother never learned French, so my sister and I learned it on our own at a French immersion school.

My first awareness of a linguistic divide in our family occurred when my mother came to pick me up during school hours. One day, she came to my Grade Four classroom when class was in session. When I saw her at the door, I explained to her that I had something I needed to do before I left. The problem was that I automatically started speaking French because I was in my French immersion class, and my teacher was there, listening. Not speaking or understanding French, my mother responded in English. With a mischievous smile, she replied that she would get even with me by answering back in Ojibwe. My classmates and teacher laughed and I sheepishly switched to English.

Sadly, this experience is a common one for Indigenous people of my generation, because many of us are separated linguistically from our parents and

⁸⁵ The Canadian civil service requires functional fluency in both official languages and many parents choose to place their children in French immersion programs to maximize their future employment prospects.

grandparents. However, this specific memory does not evoke only feelings of sadness or loss. What stands out for me is my mother's obvious pride in her own language, despite the bizarre situation of not being able to understand her own son. Many people have attested to her acquired eloquence in English, but I believe that my mother was most proud of her first language: Anishinaabemowin. When I think back, this was probably the moment when my mother planted a seed of curiosity that later inspired me to begin learning her language as an adult.

I eventually graduated with a bilingual high school diploma in a French immersion program, but the linguistic separation within our family meant that I never felt comfortable speaking French. As a result, I have firsthand experience of how and why language acquisition can fail to take root. I also had the opposite experience of successful language acquisition, when I was immersed in the Spanish language for two years while living in Cuba, Mexico and Panama. I was left with a far better command of Spanish in just two years than I was after my 12 years of academic study in French immersion in an otherwise Anglo-environment.

Unfortunately, Indigenous languages are being taught in a manner that more closely resembles the French immersion bilingual model than the true immersion experience I had in Latin America. This is especially true in urban environments, where Indigenous languages are rarely heard, but it is true even in our reserve school at Whitefish River First Nation, in Birch Island, Ontario. Anishinaabemowin and other Indigenous language programs are struggling to

develop fluent speakers. My concern deepened when I realized how suddenly English was displacing Indigenous languages, and how ill-prepared Indigenous peoples were to reverse this assimilative trend.

In fall 2005, I first began to explore a dissertation project on Anishinaabemowin revitalization in the Indigenous Governance Program's graduate research seminar at the University of Victoria. I drew upon my experience conducting and designing research instruments for qualitative interviews with Indigenous participants as the doctoral project gradually took form. I also spent time learning Anishinaabe protocols for respectfully approaching Elders and teachers.

My research process actually started earlier when I began to explore how I could learn Anishinaabemowin back in 1999. I realized that I was not unique as a non-speaker, and that Indigenous languages were declining everywhere. I took university courses, but knew, based on my previous language learning with French and Spanish, that the standard second language teaching materials and methods were inadequate. I actively pursued language learning by joining two language circles (Anishinaabemowin and Kanien'kéha) and completing a six-week Nehiyawewin immersion course at First Nations University during the summer of 2005. I attended Indigenous language conferences in Fort Frances, Sault Ste. Marie, Toronto, Victoria, and Winnipeg. I collected all the language material I could find in order to better understand what was being done, and who was doing language revitalization work in our communities. I completed five undergraduate linguistics courses in the Certificate of Aboriginal Language

Revitalization, including two summer institutes in 2006, in Penticton and Victoria, British Columbia. In summer 2007, I designed and delivered a course titled “Indigenous Language Revitalization” at First Nations University in Regina, SK. By this point I felt that I had a solid grasp of the methods and theory behind Indigenous language revitalization, but I had not yet been able to apply them in my own life.

To this end, I immersed myself in Anishinaabemowin by moving to my reserve to live with my great-aunt Lillian Pitawanakwat, who is one of our family’s last surviving speakers. Finally, I enrolled in the Anishinaabemowin Immersion program at Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute at M’Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island for the 2007-2008 academic year. In order to maintain my progress from the immersion year, I attended two summer 2008 language camps (Beausoleil and Lac Seul First Nations), and joined another Anishinaabemowin circle in Winnipeg for 2008-2009. All of these experiences have provided me with insights into the dynamics of Indigenous language revitalization that inform this dissertation, that seeks to describe Anishinaabe efforts to build bulwarks against the English tide that is sweeping across our territory.

In this sense, my first method of data collection was the recording of my own efforts to learn Anishinaabemowin. This method combines autobiography and ethnography and has three relevant aspects to my research.

Autoethnography can be associated with forms of the following: first, native anthropology or self-ethnography – in which those who previously were the objects of anthropological inquiry come to undertake ethnographic research themselves on their own ethnic or cultural group; second, ethnic autobiography – in which autobiographers emphasize their ethnic identity and ethnic origins in their life narrative; and third,

*autobiographical ethnography – a reflexive approach in which ethnographers analyse their own subjectivity and life experiences (usually within the concept of fieldwork).*⁸⁶

I am an Anishinaabe conducting research on Anishinaabeg, although I am uncomfortable with Reed-Danahay's classification of my work as "native anthropology" after Vine Deloria Jr's scathing critique of anthropologists in *Custer Died For Your Sins*.⁸⁷ One of Deloria's main criticisms was the failure of anthropologists to address in any meaningful way the needs of the communities they worked with. In this sense I hope to draw a clear distinction: I am studying Anishinaabe efforts to revitalize Anishinaabemowin because I want to find out how language revitalization projects are working, in order to help all Indigenous peoples and other linguistic minorities better understand how to maintain and revitalize their languages. Despite my discomfort bearing the label of "native anthropology" I feel that my research intends to meet all three forms outlined by Reed-Danahay. First, I am an Anishinaabe conducting research on Anishinaabeg. Second, I emphasize my ethnic identity and origins in my language journey. And third, I have reflexively described my position in Anishinaabemowin revitalization both in a general and applied sense throughout my doctoral research.

Autoethnography is employed to describe my own language journey: as an undergraduate student at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) in Regina, SK; as an assistant professor at the former SIFC and since renamed

⁸⁶ Deborah Reed-Danahay, "Autoethnography," in *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods*, ed. Victor Jupp, (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 15.

⁸⁷ Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died For Your Sins - An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Avon, 1970), 83-104.

First Nations University (FNUUniv); as a student in the Anishinaabemowin Immersion program at Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute in M'Chigeeng First Nation, Ontario; and finally as an assistant professor in the University of Winnipeg's Aboriginal Governance Program. My ongoing efforts to learn Anishinaabemowin complements the experiences of other Anishinaabeg who have been creating alternatives to linguistic assimilation that move beyond occasional symbolic use to create new revitalization opportunities.

Anishinaabe Research Principles

I am fortunate to be able to follow in the footsteps of other Anishinaabeg researchers. One to whom I am especially indebted is my friend Vanessa Watts who provides an inspiring methodological model for Anishinaabe qualitative research.⁸⁸ Her methodology of “Anishnaabe Gchi-Twaawendamowinan – or the Seven Grandfather Teachings” is based on her identity as an Anishinaabe-kwe and her relational commitment to conduct research according to Anishinaabe teachings and values. Watts explains how these sacred teachings shaped her research process.

The teaching of Zaagidewin (Love) represents my own personal involvement in the proposed research. Our stories and principles within them are very close to my heart and my upbringing and thus make me as a researcher deeply involved within and accountable to the research. Gwekwaadsiwin (Honesty) is both acknowledging my own role in the research and informing the participants of how that knowledge that is shared will be utilized and be significant to the community. Debwewin (Truth) encompasses the general research question and more specific interview questions. It is the space in which I as the researcher want to create to allow this truth to unfold. Nbwaakaawin (Wisdom) is the way in

⁸⁸ Vanessa Watts, “Towards Anishnaabe Governance and Accountability: Reawakening our Relationships and Sacred Bimaadiziwin” (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2006), 17-24.

which I approach the research. On a grand scale, it represents the methodology that I am upholding and putting into practice. Dbadendizwin (Humility) is recognizing that the researcher cannot impress personal points of view or expectations on the participants or the interview questions. Aakde'win (Bravery) is being open to hearing responses to questions that I may not expect as the researcher, while validating these concepts/points of view in the research. Finally, Mnaadendiwin (Respect) is having the ability to accept and value difference whether it is opinion or unexpected information. Mnaadendiwin requires me to approach the knowledge that is shared carefully and with good intentions.⁸⁹

Watts also emphasizes the relational accountability of Anishinaabe research which includes an overriding commitment to Anishinaabe Gchi-Twaawendamowinan should it conflict with her qualitative methods.⁹⁰

Another application of these Anishinaabe teachings in an academic context can be found in the Leech Lake Tribal College's statement of "Anishinaabe Philosophy and Values."

Dabasendizowin (humility)

To recognize oneself as a sacred and equal part of the Creation

To be modest in one's actions

To demonstrate sensitivity to others

To be respectful of the thoughts and ideas of others

To recognize one's strengths and weaknesses and acknowledge the capacity for self-growth and change

To develop and practice good listening and observation skills

Debwewin (truth)

To speak the most honestly one can, according to his/her perceptions

To be loyal in all our relationships, avoiding hypocrisy

Zoongide'iwin (courage)

To face difficult situations with bravery

To acknowledge one's personal weaknesses and develop the strength to combat them

To demonstrate the ability to take initiative and to speak forthrightly

Gwayakwaadiziwin (honesty)

To maintain truthfulness, sincerity, and fairness in all one's actions

To possess the ability to manage confidential information

To communicate with others and transmit information fairly and truthfully

Manaaji'idiwin (respect)

⁸⁹ Watts, *Towards Anishnaabe Governance and Accountability*, 18-19.

⁹⁰ Watts, *Towards Anishnaabe Governance and Accountability*, 22-23.

To accept cultural, religious, and gender differences
To maintain high standards of conduct at all times
To safeguard the dignity, individuality, and rights of others
Zaagi'idiwin (love)
To work cooperatively and harmoniously with others
To show kindness and compassion
To demonstrate acceptance and the empowerment of others
To offer hope, encouragement, and inspiration
Nibwaakaawin (wisdom)
To take time to reflect on all our experiences
To acknowledge the opportunity to learn from others
To persist in acquiring knowledge and improving skills
To strive for the accomplishment of goals and dreams
To practice ethical behavior at all times
To seek guidance from Elders and qualified advisors.⁹¹

I have endeavoured to follow my own understanding of these teachings throughout the research process. The topic and chosen research methods require careful listening, observation and sensitivity. I strive for accuracy and refute objectivity in presenting the findings of this research. I admit my still developing knowledge and skills as both a researcher and Anishinaabemowin speaker. I manage the information that has been given to me with appreciation and awe. The research participants' contributions to Anishinaabemowin revitalization inspired me to support their work by describing, analyzing, and disseminating my research so that others can also benefit from their experience and wisdom. Finally, I have learned so much from the activists, Elders, friends, scholars and teachers who have guided me on my learning journey.

I explained my research to my family and sought their approval and understanding before I embarked on my dissertation. I followed traditional protocol by offering tobacco to my doctoral committee at our first meeting, as well

⁹¹ Leech Lake Tribal College, *Anishinaabe Philosophy and Values*, April 19, 2009, <http://lltc.edu/about/> (accessed April 19, 2009).

as to all research participants, to recognize the gift of knowledge that they were sharing with me. The offering of tobacco is such a powerful gift that I was cautious to wait until immediately prior to each interview, with the participant seated, the microphone and video camera ready, and me poised to begin. I waited until this moment because for many Anishinaabeg, receiving tobacco is a binding commitment that obliges the recipient to the request. Out of respect, I did not want to place such a burden on any of my participants, and instead simply explained my project and invited their participation. Only at the last moment would I offer them tobacco and say “miigwech” for the knowledge and wisdom they were about to share with me.

Anishinaabe author Richard Wagamese has written about the instructions he received from renowned Anishinaabe Elder Arthur Solomon regarding the importance and purpose of the ritual offering of tobacco.

I was to ask myself why my question was important, why it felt necessary to move to knowledge. More importantly, I was to examine how it felt to not carry the answer. Once I'd discerned that, I was to cut a small square of cloth with the scissors, then take a pinch of the tobacco, place it in the cloth and tie it with ribbon.

This small tobacco tie would symbolize my question and my emotional and spiritual need. When I returned to Art I was to offer the tobacco. I could ask my question once the tobacco was accepted. ...True learning requires sacrifice. That's what the tobacco offering taught me. That was the intent of the ritual. That's why Art asked me to make that offering. On my quest for understanding, I had to sacrifice my time and my money. I had to sacrifice my pride by confronting the truth of my unknowing. In the end I had to sacrifice my humility by reaching out for help in understanding.⁹²

⁹² Richard Wagamese, *One Native Life* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008), 205-206.

Offering tobacco is a powerful expression of gratitude, humility, and sacrifice. It also demonstrates how Anishinaabe protocols can be enacted in academic research.

Interview Process

Aside from my experience as a second language learner of Anishinaabemowin and an emerging activist and scholar, I have also sought out the wisdom of others through individual and group qualitative interviews.⁹³ My experience with this data collection method dates back to my first job almost two decades ago when I was hired as a youth researcher with the State of Regina's Children Project in Regina, Saskatchewan. For almost a year I conducted and recorded semi-structured interviews from a prepared questionnaire. My interview participants originated from my own informal networks from school and sports teams. I transcribed my interviews and then submitted them to the lead researchers. I enjoyed learning directly from research participants about their perceptions regarding quality of life in the city.

Recently I had a similar opportunity to conduct interviews with Indigenous youth about their perceptions of Canadian politics. In the spring and summer of

⁹³ All interviews included:

Prior Informed Consent: A consent form was provided to the interviewee prior to the interview and explained verbally by the interviewer.

Anonymity: All interviewees have the option of anonymity offered prior to starting the interview. The purpose of this study is to celebrate the speaking of our language so it was hoped that all participants would feel welcome to participate in interviews without concern for their individual privacy. Nonetheless, that privacy would be respected if requested but no interviewees requested anonymity.

Recording Devices: Permission was requested and given to video record all interviews.

Storage of Recordings: All data has been transcribed and returned to the interviewees for verification prior to analysis. The video interviews will be archived and will be made available for student research on Indigenous language revitalization. Transcripts have been coded according to the type of interview (individual or group).

2007, I worked with Dr. Taiaiake Alfred and Jackie Price on a research project looking at Indigenous youth perspectives on politics. It was helpful to go through the process with Alfred as the lead researcher to see a qualitative research project conducted from beginning to end. I was tasked with the preliminary literature review and then the three of us worked together on the prospectus. Price and I conducted, transcribed, and analyzed the interviews before passing along the significant findings to Alfred for summarizing. Price and I also presented our research findings at a gathering hosted by the Canadian Policy Research Network in Ottawa.

The experience of conducting qualitative research with Indigenous participants and an all-Indigenous research team was key to giving me the confidence to embark on my independent doctoral research. The most significant methodological adjustment was at the behest of my committee during my proposal defense in August 2007. It was recommended and unanimously agreed that the interview component of the data collection should be with video rather than just audio recordings. In summer 2008, I successfully applied for ethics approval to conduct human research,⁹⁴ while also learning how to operate an HD video camera with a wireless lapel microphone.

I personally contacted and recruited leading activists, scholars and teachers of Anishinaabemowin with relevant experience in urban areas as potential participants.⁹⁵ I approached potential participants with feelings of

⁹⁴ Appendix E is the “Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval” – Protocol No. 08-151.

⁹⁵ I will explain each of these terms although they are far from mutually-exclusive. Activists included political and other community leaders who have made language

reverence for their work and modesty as an ASL learner and junior researcher. I sought out their wisdom because they are the active agents in revitalizing Anishinaabemowin. Anishinaabe Elder Arthur Solomon once wrote a “song of hope” about the Indigenous cultural and spiritual re-awakening and compared it to the dawning of a new day

*The nature of the spiritual and cultural rebirth
of Native people is not easy to describe.
But I will use this way that seems the easiest.*

*The nature of the rebirth is like this,
When the sun comes up in the morning it shines
on the higher ground first, it warms up the ground,
and the air, and the plants, and the people,
They see it and feel it and understand it.*

*But on the lower ground it comes later.
And in the deep shade the perception
comes very slowly and very poorly.*

*The ones on the higher ground
are the leaders, the elders and the spiritual people.
They are the ones who see and feel and understand
the nature of “The Bundle” that has been left behind.
It is they who understand the nature and meaning
and the power of those sacred ways.
That “Bundle” contains the original instructions
and the sacred teachings that were given
to our people so that they could conduct themselves
in honour and reverence toward the Creation*

*The nature of the renaissance is like the sun coming up
in the morning.
And there is no man who has the power to stand there
and say to the sun, “Don’t come up just yet
because I am not ready.”⁹⁶*

preservation a priority in their activism although they may not be studying or teaching the language. Scholars were those conducting research or have written about Anishinaabemowin. Teachers were those who have coordinated, delivered, and developed Anishinaabemowin programming.

⁹⁶ Arthur Solomon, *Songs For The People - Teachings On The Natural Way* (Toronto, ON: NC Press Limited, 1990), 77.

I see the participants in this study as the visionaries described by Solomon. They are “on the higher ground” and are among the first Anishinaabeg to recognize that Anishinaabemowin is part of the sacred bundle that is being left behind.

As an Anishinaabe language learner and instructor in language revitalization methods and theory, I used academic, personal, and professional networks to seek out these participants. The target population allowed for diversity in age, gender, political involvement, and region. I was cautious to avoid any power or influence over the recruitment of potential participants through my work as an assistant professor in Aboriginal Governance at the University of Winnipeg in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I initially contacted potential participants by email and telephone to determine their interest in meeting for an interview. I introduced this research using the "Appendix A - Information Letter" or summarized its contents in conversation. If potential research participants agreed to participate, a date and time was arranged to meet and conduct the interview in order to give them time to think about their participation and address any other questions they may have. Wherever possible, interviews and site visits were made to observe their language initiatives in a variety of settings on Anishinaabe territory: Brandon, Lac Seul First Nation, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Peterborough, Sagamok First Nation, Sault Sainte Marie, Sault Tribe of Chippewas Reservation, Sudbury, Toronto and Winnipeg.

When meeting with a participant, I presented the "Appendix B - Participant Consent Form" which restated the information from the “Information Letter.” All

participants were also asked to sign a release form for the videos that would allow them to be disseminated for educational/non-commercial purposes (see "Appendix C - Participant Release Form for Photographs and Videos"). We both signed and dated the consent forms. I explained the interview process with each potential research participant, described this project and requested their feedback to determine any concerns they may have and their willingness to participate. I outlined my research goals to the participant as stated in the "Appendix B - Participant Consent Form" and explained that this interview was designed to be informal and semi-structured with prepared questions (see "Appendix D - Interview Questions"). Interviews focused upon their experiences, stories and knowledge regarding efforts to maintain and revitalize the Indigenous language of Anishinaabemowin in an urban context.

I explained to each of the participants that involvement was voluntary and there was no obligation to participate in the interview. If they chose to withdraw from the interview at any time, there would be no repercussions or consequences. Participants were also notified that they could withdraw after the interview was complete. If participants choose to withdraw from the research project they could request in writing that their data be destroyed or returned to them. The consent form explained this option for each participant (see Appendix B). Furthermore, my contact information as well as my supervisor's contact information was provided to each participant had they wished to discuss at any time concerns they had about this research and the information they provided.

The following interview questions were presented to participants. Some were slightly modified or occasionally deleted during the course of an interview if answers to previous questions had adequately addressed its purpose. The interview questions were open to modification as new categories or concepts emerged during the data collection. Overlap between questions was included in order to ensure topics were thoroughly covered over the course of the interview:

- Please tell me about the language work you have done in your career?
- What prompted you to do this work?
- If you had unlimited financial and other resources to design an Anishinaabemowin program, what would you create?
- Do you believe it is important to maintain Anishinaabemowin in the city? Why?
- How have Anishinaabeg maintained their languages as they move off-reserve into the major cities?
- What processes and institutions have been developed to continue learning and speaking Anishinaabemowin in urban areas?
- What are the advantages and benefits of urban-based language programs?
- What are the challenges or obstacles to urban Anishinaabemowin revitalization?
- What innovative measures have been employed to meet those challenges and overcome those obstacles?
- How does Anishinaabemowin relate to “being Anishinaabe” in the city? In other words, how does language relate to other aspects of peoplehood such as ceremonies, history, and territory?
- Is Anishinaabemowin revitalization political? Does it relate to self-government or self-determination? How?
- Is there anything you would like to add on this topic of urban Anishinaabemowin revitalization?

As explained above, interview questions were added, modified, or removed to eliminate redundancy or to seek elaboration on points raised by participants. However, one unanticipated modification was implemented after the first three interviews and merits further explanation. The interview questions were chosen to focus on Anishinaabemowin revitalization, but one of the original

questions seemed to lead participants in a different direction: “Would you have done things differently if you could have? How?” The elicited answers concerned me because their focus tended towards admission of mistakes and expressions of regret. This was not the direction I wanted my research to take and also went against my ethical commitment to reduce potential harm to participants. Furthermore, I felt that there was little to be gained by exploring this direction because the issue of language loss is widely-known in Indigenous communities and well-documented in the research literature. I was concerned the participants would experience emotional or psychological discomfort due to the guilt and shame caused by Indigenous language loss. Residential schools have attached a lasting stigma to Indigenous languages for many Indigenous people. I decided to instead emphasize my research purpose to explore Anishinaabe resilience to protect our ancestral language and rephrased the question accordingly. “If you had unlimited financial and other resources, what type of Anishinaabemowin program would you create?” This was dubbed the “lottery” question and it generated the most enthusiasm during the interviews with the remaining nineteen participants. It encouraged them to dream about the future and free themselves from the constant constraints of resources and time. In the end, I was relieved to see that the interviews caused no visible harm or stress for the participants.

Each interview concluded with an opportunity to debrief and address any questions or concerns. After the interviews were transcribed each participant was provided with transcripts for verification. Participants were provided one

month to review and make any changes to their interview transcripts. Once the interview transcripts were returned or the one-month time limit had elapsed, then analysis was conducted on the transcripts. Many participants expressed gratitude for the interview transcript and took the time to read over and clarify certain passages. A few even added new content to develop ideas that were left out during the actual interview. For these reasons, the videos and the transcripts used for analysis differ slightly.

Because Anishinaabemowin had not yet been studied as a social movement, it needed to be described before it could be analyzed. The data collected from the interview transcripts was coded and analyzed to identify concepts that were organized into categories. My analytical methods are drawn primarily from a Grounded Theory approach. What first appealed to me is Grounded Theorists' commitment to remain faithful to data by allowing theory to emerge from there as opposed to fitting the data into existing theoretical constructs. When I began analyzing the interviews, I had no prepared categories and instead employed the constant comparative method,⁹⁷ a specific analytical method of Grounded Theory to identify the dimensions and properties of the themes or categories that emerged from the interviews. This process of comparing different codes as well as examining their properties produced my analysis. For example, while reviewing the transcripts I developed a code on "motivations for AR." While developing this code further, I realized that motivations had many different dimensions and it was based on this realization

⁹⁷ Juliet M. Corbin and Anselm L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd edition (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 73-74.

that I organized Chapter Two to explore the range of dimensions and properties that make up “motivations” for revitalizing Anishinaabemowin.

In their classic text on developing Grounded Theory, authors Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss explain that Grounded Theory encourages researchers to continue data collection until new data does not add qualitatively to the research already gathered. This is known in the field as the “saturation” point. As a result, my original proposal to conduct sixteen qualitative interviews was revised to twenty-two before I was satisfied that additional interviews would not substantively enhance the analytical findings.

The majority of the findings will be presented in the following chapters, but I would like to offer an example here that also led to an adjustment in how I framed my entire research project. The original intent was to generate a Grounded Theory of urban Anishinaabemowin revitalization activism and pedagogy. The line I initially drew between urban and reserve-based language programming became increasingly irrelevant as the study progressed. The research participants revealed in their interviews that Anishinaabemowin revitalization, as a social movement, moves back and forth across the divide between on and off-reserve Anishinaabeg. In one of the interviews, a respondent convincingly and concisely dismissed any on-reserve/off-reserve distinction.

With regards to the difference between an on-reserve and an off-reserve urban initiative, the language doesn't make that distinction. Wherever our people reside, on-reserve or off-reserve, they're all going to be speaking the same language. They should have access to that opportunity.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Darrell Boissoneau, interview by author, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. October 10, 2008.

Based on this response and other similar feedback from participants, I soon realized that the category of “urban language revitalization” was my own artificial construct and was not reflected in the data. As a result, the issues that mattered most to my research participants eclipsed the “urban” component of this study. In other words, I refocused on their interviews (my primary research data) to produce an analysis of Anishinaabemowin revitalization as a process needed throughout Anishinaabe-aki in order to better reflect what I had been told by my research participants.

It is necessary for me to raise a crucial methodological point at the outset. The analytical process occasionally feels artificial, even disrespectful, as I attempt to conceptually organize and re-organize the research findings because it often decontextualizes, or breaks up, what participants shared during the interviews. As discussed in the previous section on Anishinaabe Research Principles, I chose to conduct my research according to the Anishinaabe Gchi-Twaawendamowinan. I understand the most fundamental Anishinaabe value to be respect and showing respect means honouring my relationships to the research participants by maintaining the context and integrity of their interviews. I have attempted to balance these established relationships with the new ones I will form with my readers who will be looking to me for guidance when deriving meaning from my research. The research participants are articulate, brilliant, and creative people who require no interpretation to make themselves understood even when English is not their first language. Although I have engaged with the ideas of each of my participants I have attempted, out of

respect, to minimize imposing on or interfering with their narratives. In the following chapters, I want to reduce my role as interpreter so that the research participants and readers can engage each other as directly as possible.

Although I have endeavoured to ground my analysis in the experience and wisdom of the research participants, I accept my full responsibility for any errors or misrepresentations of the data. I have positioned myself in the research as a second language learner of Anishinaabemowin and an academic to clarify my influence on this dissertation's analytical codes and categories, which remain my own constructs. I share this research in the hope that it will encourage others to speak, study, and teach Anishinaabemowin and other endangered languages.

Anticipated Research Benefits and Dissemination Plans

This research is intended to answer Vine Deloria Jr.'s challenge that scholarship on Indigenous topics be useful to Indigenous people.⁹⁹ I have tried to respond to his challenge and hope that the "after-life" of this doctoral project will support revitalization efforts of Anishinaabeg and any other people who must protect their languages.¹⁰⁰ My research has introduced me to an informal network of interested language activists, learners and teachers. The sharing of research results is my opportunity to give back and honour what all participants have

⁹⁹ Deloria, *Custer Died For Your Sins*, 97-99.

¹⁰⁰ Deborah Cameron, Elizabeth Frazer, Penelope Harvey, M.B.H. Rampton and Kay Richardson, *Researching Language - Issues of Power and Method* (London: Routledge, 1992), 136-7. The authors explain this concept of "after-life" for the residual impacts of research over which the researcher has little influence. They identify three types of after-life: "local, academic, and public." The authors feel that the author has the greatest influence in determining the local and academic impacts and less in terms of its public influence, particularly on public policy. "Obviously, researchers need to think about the potential public uptake of their word, and before committing themselves to a programme of research which might reinforce popular (or scholarly) prejudices and misapprehensions."

shared during the data collection. I am the principal beneficiary because this dissertation is both a major requirement for my Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Victoria and also a requisite for my job at the University of Winnipeg. I remain awestruck by the generosity and support of the research participants who were informed of my personal investments in this research project yet nevertheless agreed to participate. The research on Anishinaabemowin revitalization offers numerous potential benefits to others as well. I believe that there is a substantial benefit to participants by promoting and supporting their efforts to revitalize Anishinaabemowin for all Anishinaabeg. Societal benefits may include what other Indigenous and heritage language projects learn from Anishinaabe efforts. Academic benefits may include furthering our understanding of social movements generally and Indigenous movements specifically.

To honour the knowledge bestowed by my participants, I have already begun disseminating the research results with presentations on the preliminary findings at the following events: the Canadian Indigenous Native Studies Association conference at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario (June 2008); the Anishinaabemowin Teg language conference at the Sault Tribe Reservation, Michigan (March 2009); the Native American Indigenous Studies Association conference at the University of Minnesota (May 2009); and an Ojibwe Language Camp at the University of Winnipeg (June 2009). I have also received permission from participants for an online multimedia release of the research that will blend text and video as part of disseminating the research

findings.¹⁰¹ A video compilation of the interviews will also be created and will be made available to Anishinaabe communities and language revitalization organizations.

The dissertation chapters have been organized as follows. Chapter One “Introduction” introduced the topic, its research context and the research design. The following four chapters report the findings of the study and their analysis. Chapter Two “Inspiration and Motivation for Anishinaabemowin Revitalization” introduces the interview participants and explains how and why they became involved with their language work. Chapter Three “Strategies and Methods” provides an overview of the myriad ways that Anishinaabemowin revitalization is taking place across Anishinaabe-aki. Chapter Four “Mobilizing An Anishinaabemowin Revitalization Movement” analyzes how AR participants are organizing to promote and recruit others to their cause. Chapter Five “Self-Determining Anishinaabemowin Revitalization” connects AR participants’ perceptions of how their revitalization work relates to broader Anishinaabe political projects such as self-determination and self-government. Finally, Chapter Six “Reflections on the Findings” summarizes my research on this emerging Anishinaabemowin revitalization movement, relates the study’s findings to Indigenous Governance, and suggests future pathways for AR work and related research.

¹⁰¹ Each participant signed the “Appendix C - Participant Release Form for Photographs and Videos” that waived anonymity and confidentiality for participation with the understanding that the research results would be broadly disseminated for non-commercial and educational purposes. A DVD of the video interviews will be offered to Anishinaabe communities and heritage organizations.

Chapter Two: Inspiration & Motivation for Anishinaabemowin Revitalization

This chapter introduces the research participants according to their initial inspirations and ongoing motivations for promoting Anishinaabemowin Revitalization (AR). Mobilizing support is crucial for those working in cultural heritage protection and language revitalization. Sufficient public interest could reinforce vulnerable cultures and languages that currently require protection and revitalization. Studying why AR contributors become and remain involved in revitalization work offers potential recruiting strategies. The relevant research questions explored in this chapter are: Who is involved in AR work? Why did they initially become involved? What motivates them to remain involved?

In attempting to organize this chapter in a meaningful way, I was struck by similarities in participants' motivations for their work. I chose to organize this chapter by grouping similar motivations into three emergent categories. The first category involves initial practical reasons why participants became engaged in AR work. Prominent featured examples include: the gradual realization that the language was declining but elected leadership was unresponsive to its disappearance; receiving job offers to teach language that provided a source of income or piqued curiosity (or both); and the joy of teaching Anishinaabemowin as a second language (ASL).

The second emergent category is about what Basil Johnston describes below as "Dibistwaagewin," responsibilities or duties: responsibilities to creation, to our ancestors, to language learners, and to future generations. The principle

of self-reliance and responsibility is a recurring theme throughout the interviews and many stressed the need to break away from a mindset of dependency that assumes governments, either Aboriginal or Canadian, will bring about AR.

The third category is the language's potential to restore individuals, families, and communities. Many participants believe Anishinaabemowin has the power to heal the damage done by colonization. Just as residential schools damaged Anishinaabe children by taking away their ancestral language, participants hope that revitalizing Anishinaabemowin will undo that damage and restore Anishinaabe peoplehood.

I will now move from these categories to the people who informed my understanding. But before I describe the complex diversity of the women and men who make up this AR movement, I will begin with what they have in common. All are adult Anishinaabeg ranging in age from their early 20s to early 70s. All reside in Manitoba or Ontario and identify with a reserve community. All have formal or informal teaching experience although not necessarily in teaching the language. All have some postsecondary education and most have completed or will soon complete a university degree. Every participant values Anishinaabemowin and feels AR work is important.

Aside from these commonalities, there is considerable diversity in the AR movement. There are first language speakers and second language learners. There are those who study the language, teach it, or advocate on its behalf. Some continue to live on-reserve while others have spent many years living in a different city or province. The diversity of research participants is reflected in the

different motivations that commit them to their language work. This chapter describes a range of these motivations for AR participation.

Another variable among participants was their morale and optimism for AR success. Those who have been doing this work the longest seem more cautious, or even discouraged, about AR's long-term prospects. Basil Johnston is from Cape Croker First Nation and is the most prolific Anishinaabe author of non-fiction cultural heritage materials. In his lifetime Johnston has witnessed the steady decline of Anishinaabemowin as a dwindling number of speakers seek to preserve it. His thoughts on the status of the language in Anishinaabe-aki sum up the past four decades of decline.

I've been at this since about 1968 and it's discouraging (long pause). I thought the people on my reserve would pick up the language and I have been teaching language since '98, '99. I rented a hall. At first they came out and I guess at one time there were about 45 and I thought that would be a marvelous start. The last couple of years, maybe I've got five. And all of those are speakers! There may be ten people who are fairly proficient in my community.¹⁰²

Johnston's scholarship meticulously collected Anishinaabe oral history and literature to present Anishinaabe philosophy to English-speaking audiences. He has won numerous national awards and honorary degrees but his pride remains firmly rooted in his people's traditions.

And in looking into my background, into Anishinaabemowin, Anishinaabe-maadziwin, I have found a great deal. All the institutions that the U.S. has adopted and bellows forth to the entire world as if they had invented, came from the Native people of North America. When the West Europeans came here, they didn't bring independence, or equality, or land ownership, or dream. They came here to escape the old order and they took what we had. And land. Very often the Natives talk about, you know, "We lost land." We lost a hell of a lot more than that!

¹⁰² Basil Johnston, interview by author, Brandon, Manitoba. November 20, 2008.

We became wards of the state, no equality. We were pressed into little wee reserves. Compressed also was our liberty to come and go. We now have bosses where we didn't have them before. We lost all that. We can't dream now except for the proceeds at [Casino] Rama to come in large portions. But they were all there. And we have words for these institutions, but you can't, it seems to me that on my reserve and a lot of communities in southern Ontario that doesn't matter anymore. It seems as if their attitude is it isn't worth very much anyway. "I can get along without it." They've lost a sense of duty to the heritage and it used to be there. This dibistwaagewin, your duty.

So I provided manuals for beginners, intermediates and advanced. And I've got stories on CDs. I've written twenty-two books so far. And the lessons keep [happening] and the number of people speaking the language keeps dwindling. Now I foresee the day when the federal government is going to say, "Well you guys don't give a damn about your heritage anymore, you don't speak it anymore. You may as well dissolve all the Indian reserves because you're no different from us."...So it's discouraging, but I can say at least I did my best. That's all I can say."¹⁰³

AR Initial Engagement

All participants have unique stories for how they became involved in AR, but some common themes emerged. As mentioned above, participants sometimes became involved for practical reasons: because no one else was stepping forward; because they were offered a job; or simply because they enjoyed speaking and teaching Anishinaabemowin. This chapter introduces the research participants in order to allow them to describe their motivations in their own words.

AR Is Needed (But Politicians Are Failing To Lead)

Many participants expressed discouragement and frustration that so little is being done to maintain and revitalize Anishinaabemowin. These participants are driven to act because they recognize that politicians, whether Aboriginal or Canadian,

¹⁰³ Johnston, interview.

are unwilling to take decisive action to halt and reverse the erosion of Indigenous languages. Lorena Fontaine is Anishinaabe from Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba and works as a professor in the Aboriginal Governance Program at the University of Winnipeg.

I wonder why our leadership talks about the importance of saving Aboriginal languages, but they are not prepared to direct resources towards it. Perhaps the problem is that the current leadership is part of a generation that can still speak the language and they don't know what it's like to not be able to communicate in the language. Our generation understands the urgency because we know what it feels like to not be able to communicate with our grandparents or great-grandparents. We also know what it's like to not understand what is being said during our ceremonies. We also know what it feels like to not be able to joke with the older generation. Our generation has also been isolated from family members because we cannot speak our language. Our generation does not want our children to experience that.¹⁰⁴

Basil Johnston regretted that many Anishinaabe elected leaders no longer speak Anishinaabemowin and are reduced to relying on others' interpretations of their own cultural heritage.

Not speaking in the language they have to hire anthropologists and other academics to teach them about Indian thought. If they had their own speakers, they wouldn't need to do that. And I would require all the band administrative staff to speak the language. Right now all they do is pay lip service to the language. And it's maybe because they don't know what their heritage contains.¹⁰⁵

Participants frequently identified this gap between rhetoric and action on the part of political leaders. Howard Webkamigad is a veteran Anishinaabemowin teacher who is also originally from Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve on Manitoulin Island in Ontario. He has travelled around Anishinaabe-aki teaching

¹⁰⁴ Lorena Fontaine, interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba. September 25, 2008.

¹⁰⁵ Johnston, interview.

in both Michigan and Ontario, and he now works at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

I used to work at a tribal council for a short stint, in one of my past lives. It always seemed to amaze me that when the Chiefs would get up at their gatherings, language is important. But when it came to the budget, there was practically nothing assigned to language learning or maintenance of language, there was nowhere in the budgets that they would approve. They'd say one thing at the national conferences or whatever, regional gatherings, but when they got to their own communities and when they started dividing the money up, on who gets what, language never made it to the pot.

So I guess, at the leadership level, it's not that important. That's what I gathered from listening to them and seeing they'd say these beautiful things about language, but when it came down to the nitty-gritty, language seemed to be cast aside, or moved to the back burner. "Maybe next year." So it's hard to see what even at the Chief's level or leadership level, I don't think there's any connection, I don't think they really place any importance on language. They'll give it lip service and that's about it, so they sound good to their people I guess. But they don't do anything about it. And I can see their point. Education has to get so much. Housing has to get so much. Jobs, they have to create jobs somehow. So this self-determination, it's nice that they're trying it. Hopefully they get what they're asking for and get a piece of the pie from the federal and provincial government so that they can start building things and doing things. You can't rely on casinos all the time.¹⁰⁶

Many participants acknowledged the challenges facing Anishinaabe political leaders who must deal simultaneously with multiple economic, social and political issues. One participant spoke from experience, having worked extensively in politics before dedicating himself full time to Indigenous language revitalization. Nelson Toulouse is from Sagamok First Nation and is a former chief who had a successful career in local and regional politics. Like Fontaine, Johnston and Webkamigad, Toulouse felt that the political process was not adequately addressing the declining use of Indigenous languages in Ontario. He

¹⁰⁶ Howard Webkamigad, interview by author, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. October 3, 2008.

successfully lobbied the Chiefs of Ontario for the creation of the Anishinaabe-Mushkegowuk-Onkwehonwe Language Commission (AMOLC). The commission is dedicated to Indigenous language revitalization, and has representatives from all of the major languages in Ontario with Toulouse serving as the head commissioner. When I asked him to describe how he became involved in AR he cited his concern that language was a low priority on the political agenda.

I think a lot of your own personal history sort of motivates you to want to do something. I've always wanted to champion languages and I think what's happened in the past is, in my political life, any time I attempted to I found it frustrating because you're dealing with people that simply don't understand or people that don't support it as strongly as you do, and you're dealing with frustrations of people out there in the field at the ground level trying to teach the language. So I think, towards the end, working with those kinds of people sort of motivated us to do something more, and that was, to do something very specific to language. So it was an accumulation of things getting mandated by the political body to do that work. And of course, towards that end, you lobby politicians and others that support you and basically convince them that language is an important thing.¹⁰⁷

Toulouse emphasized that he sees himself as a spokesperson on behalf of Native as a Second Language (NSL) teachers who are trying to maintain and revitalize Indigenous languages in classrooms throughout the province.

It was mostly the frustrations of language teachers. That's initially what drove the development or creation of this language commission. Too often when language is being discussed at different forums, political forums or probably even at communities it was always at the last or a very low part of the agenda so those were difficulties we had. The surprising thing is anybody you talk to will support you and agree that it's important. But on a practical level all these other things are more important. I think it just talks to the current and historical social dilemma that we've been living under. That is all the social ills of the different problems we encounter: housing, the various abuses that you know we have in our lives, in our communities and our abilities to try and deal with them.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Nelson Toulouse, interview by author, Sagamok First Nation, Ontario. October 8, 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

Pat Ningewance Nadeau is a highly respected Anishinaabemowin publisher and teacher who lives and works in Winnipeg, but grew up near her community of Obizhigokaang (Lac Seul First Nation) in Ontario. She has been involved with AR since the mid-1970s and expressed frustration with Canada's continued failure to support Indigenous languages. She criticized the gross disparity between the billions that Canada has spent on bolstering Anglophone or Francophone linguistic minorities across Canada versus the paltry funding available for Indigenous languages.

I have worked in language so, so long. I have gone to many conferences where I went as a participant, you know, just as an observer and I have also gone where I have presented. I have done at least 45 workshops at conferences on different topics. But at each conference I used to hear the same thing over and over again. We need this. We need that. 30 years ago, 35 years ago, I heard the same things that I hear today. People needing books, people needing resource materials, dictionaries, videos, you know, things to use in the classroom. And a language policy – all those things that the French, for instance, have.¹⁰⁹

Ningewance Nadeau also lamented the inertia among many Anishinaabeg to participate in AR.

I've always found too, in my past, people are always waiting for something to happen. That something would be done and I was part of that. I always thought, "Somebody should do this or somebody should do that. And I guess waiting for universities or for governments to do something and it doesn't happen - that's what led me into publishing and writing."¹¹⁰

AR Is Work

Many participants described their initial involvement in revitalization work as a vocation for which they were qualified because they were Anishinaabemowin

¹⁰⁹ Pat Ningewance Nadeau, interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba. September 18, 2008.

¹¹⁰ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

speakers. Ningewance Nadeau taught her first Ojibwe class 35 years ago for Confederation College in Sioux Lookout and has since been continuously involved in mass media, organizing, publishing, teaching and translating.¹¹¹

When I asked her what inspired or motivated her work she answered, “That’s such a hard question because I have just always been doing it.”

I went to one year of residential school as a small child and the rest of the time I grew up with my parents in Hudson, Ontario, where I had both parents teaching us the language at home and also my grandmother who lived with us quite a lot of the time. So it was always the language at home. There was no English until much later. I just grew up very proud of my language and never thinking that it would ever be second-place in my life. Right after high school, the jobs that were offered to me all the time were to do with my ability to speak my language and to read and write it. I never had to apply for a job – I was always being offered work. So I never had to think about why I was doing it because it was just my skill. I was fortunate to have been taught how to read and write by my mother.¹¹²

Many first language speakers provided similar responses about their involvement in Anishinaabemowin teaching. Barb Nolan is another renowned teacher of Anishinaabemowin at the Community College on the Bay Mills Reservation in Michigan, where she teaches in the immersion program. She is a dynamic and engaging ASL instructor who also does curriculum development through the Shingwauk Education Trust. She is originally from Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island, but married into Gitigan Ziibiing (Garden River) First Nation just outside Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. When I asked Nolan how she became involved in teaching the language, she described how the initial idea came from students.

Back in 1973, I worked as a native counselor for students that came from Garden River and Batchewana First Nation and attended the schools in Sault Ste. Marie. At that time, they took French as a second language.

¹¹¹ Pat Ningewance, *Talking Gookom's Language: Learning Ojibwe* (Lac Seul, ON: Mazinaate Press, 2004), xvii.

¹¹² Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

There was quite a few students. I think the percentage of Aboriginal students at St. Hubert's school was almost 50%. The students were very unhappy about taking the French program. One of them happened to hear me speak the language at one point...and she said, "Why do we have to take French in school? Why can't we take our own language? We're not French." So, I decided to work on getting something together for the principal and then he submitted that proposal to the school board who then sent it to the Ministry of Education. It came back, it flowed back down the same little trail to the principal that it was approved that we go ahead with teaching a Native as Second Language program...From St. Hubert's school back in '73, I was the very first teacher of Native as a Second Language in the province of Ontario. Then others followed suit. I taught the very first language course here at Algoma University and then also at Sault College.¹¹³

Shirley Williams is also originally from Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve and began teaching Anishinaabemowin at Niagara College in the 1980s. Like Nolan, Williams was working in education but was not a language teacher; she was instructing students in a transition program on how to prepare for the workforce or to pursue further postsecondary education. However, Williams' students at Niagara asked her to teach them Anishinaabemowin and this experience inspired her to become a full-time language teacher. She enrolled in the Native Language Instructors Program at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and was hired to teach at Trent University. Williams has been teaching the language ever since both in Peterborough and back at her alma mater in Thunder Bay.

Many things evolved from teaching language at Lakehead University. There is a difference there. Here you just teach students who want to learn the language and over there you're teaching how to teach the language. So there's a difference. ... It just hit home how I loved it. I think for the very first time, I found home.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Barb Nolan, interview by author, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. October 8, 2008.

¹¹⁴ Shirley Williams, interview by author, Peterborough, Ontario. October 10, 2008.

Isadore Toulouse is also from Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island and another fluent speaker of Anishinaabemowin. He serves in many prominent AR roles including: language teacher in Toronto for almost three decades, an interpreter for the Anishinabek Nation's legislative assemblies, and the board president of the annual Anishinaabemowin Teg conference that takes place every March. When I asked him how he became involved in his language work, he explained that he first became interested in teaching back in high school because he was concerned that a non-Native person was teaching Native Studies.

I commend the work that he did, but to me, it's not right for a non-Native person to be teaching Indian children about who they are and where they come from. I think it should come from us and there are enough qualified First Nation, Ojibwe, Native people, to take on that task, to become teachers and teach who we are. I can't go to China and teach about Chinese culture. So that's where my vision of becoming a teacher started: that we need our own people to tell our stories, to tell who we are, where we've come from, where we've been, where we're going, what we're about to do, our trials and tribulations to our successes today.¹¹⁵

Webkamigad was first approached to teach an Ojibwe language course when he was still completing his bachelor's degree in Sudbury.

I was asked when I was at Laurentian, I was doing a B.A. program there in the mid early '70s and one summer the group of teachers from Manitoulin, from the different reserves on Manitoulin, wanted somebody to come and teach a course, but they wanted language. So Dr. Newberry who was the chairman of Native Studies Department at the University of Sudbury asked if I'd be willing to do that. And I said, "Okay, I'll give it a try."¹¹⁶

Although many participants were initially approached by others and started teaching ASL with trepidation, they soon overcame their initial anxiety and began to enjoy their work. Webkamigad was invited to try language teaching and enjoyed it enough to make it his lifelong vocation.

¹¹⁵ Isadore Toulouse, interview by author, Toronto, Ontario. November 30, 2008.

¹¹⁶ Webkamigad, interview.

It was just something interesting, something good to do. It's kind of easy to do really, for me anyway. It worked out quite well...we had fun. So that's when I first had the chance at trying to teach the language.¹¹⁷

Webkamigad's introduction to language teaching is similar to many other AR activists. In some cases the experience has been nearly identical. Mary Ann Naokwegijig-Corbiere was recruited to AR work in the same way as Webkamigad. Like Webkamigad, she is a fluent Anishinaabemowin speaker from Wikwemikong who now teaches the language as a professor of Native Studies. In our interview she explained that it was her love for the language that led her to move back to Northern Ontario after completing university in Toronto.

Although I had friends who spoke Anishinaabemowin also in Toronto, I just missed being around the language. Instead of pursuing a career based on what I studied in Toronto, which was earth and environmental sciences, I thought, "I want to go back home for a while and spend some time with my family and hearing the language again all the time, rather than just when I am able to hook up with friends in Toronto during our school week or work week." So I knew that I did not like gradually beginning to speak my language improperly. That did bother me. But I didn't connect that to, "Someday I want to teach the language," or "I want to preserve this language." I didn't even have a sense of that at that time that our language was being eroded.¹¹⁸

Naokwegijig-Corbiere was invited to teach Anishinaabemowin by the Native Studies department at the University of Sudbury. She described being initially intimidated by the proposal.

And at the time, I thought, "Oh no, I'm not trained to teach language, I'm not a professor, I don't know." And they sort of coaxed me. They said, "Well, you have all you need to know. You speak Anishinaabemowin don't you?" And I said, "Yeah," and they said, "That's all you need to know." And I said, "Okay, I'll try it." And I just fell in love with it. Then I saw they needed the correspondence courses, but there was nothing really for us to use, we had to start from scratch and for me, that's the kind of problem

¹¹⁷ Webkamigad, interview.

¹¹⁸ Mary Ann Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview by author, Sudbury, Ontario. October 6, 2008.

solving I love. Well, I love the language, but I also love sorting out the facts, “Okay; what can I do to help others learn this language?”¹¹⁹

Naokwegijig-Corbiere quickly realized how much she enjoyed teaching the language and she strives to make learning equally fun for her students.

So in class I have fun. I don't know about my students, some of them seem to have fun. I hope I don't scare them away too much (laughter)... How I try to inspire them is by showing how much fun we can have in the language.¹²⁰

This leads to another frequently cited motivation for AR: learning and teaching Anishinaabemowin can be fun!

AR is Fun (and Funny)

Many people involved in promoting Anishinaabemowin emphasize its inherent humour and how much they enjoy hearing or speaking it. Ningewance Nadeau stresses this point in the introduction to her Ojibwe language textbook *Talking Gookom's Language*. “Over and over my students told me what they wanted to learn...They wanted to know what fluent Ojibwe people are saying when they're laughing and talking at gatherings and at home.”¹²¹ Ningewance Nadeau also encourages learners who might feel insecure about their efforts to speak the language, particularly when such efforts draw laughter from more proficient speakers.

Fluent Ojibwes will laugh at anything. Anything. Trying to describe native language humour is like trying to describe colours to one who's never seen colours. The only thing I can say is to shrug it off, and take faith that one day soon, you'll be as silly as the rest of us when you learn the language. What a thing to aspire to.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

¹²⁰ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

¹²¹ Ningewance, *Talking Gookom's Language*, xv.

¹²² Ningewance, *Talking Gookom's Language*, xxii.

Melvin Peltier explained that he initially became involved in AR when he accepted a position at Sault College working in Anishinaabemowin resource development and student recruitment. Sharing Anishinaabe humour in the language is one of his primary motivations when working with learners.

And you look at them and even though they may say something a little off, you try to joke with them and they laugh and you laugh at them because Anishinaabe people, when they talk, when you talk in the language, it's more humour than anything else. There's not too much anger in anything, there's no angry words in the language pretty well, it's more of the way it's phrased out. It's funny. As you can probably attest to from hearing Anishinaabeg people speak at conferences and stuff, it's always laughter. You hear people laughing all the time. That's what motivates me is to see somebody that's just learning it and start laughing. You don't see any frustration. If they're frustrated it's not going to do you any good (laughter). You might as well enjoy and laugh about it.¹²³

Another participant was training to be an electrician, but soon switched his career plans to become a certified Anishinaabemowin language teacher because he found ASL learning and teaching to be “a lot of fun.”¹²⁴ Webkamigad also believed that both learners and teachers can enjoy working with the language.

But the students seem to enjoy the class, they seem to have fun. That's one thing I tell them, you have to learn to laugh in this class, you have to laugh. So when I see students that seem to, especially when they look and kind of go, “ahhhh!” and sort of understand something, it's kind of interesting. But most of the time I get that [expression of wide-eyed confusion] stare, that good old college stare [laughter]. Sometimes I have to wave at them. But it's fun, it's fun teaching.¹²⁵

¹²³ Melvin Peltier, interview by author, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. October 3, 2008.

¹²⁴ Perry Bebamash, interview by author, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. October 3, 2008.

¹²⁵ Webkamigad, interview.

Dibistwaagewin (Duties & Responsibilities)

Participants frequently framed their AR participation in terms of duties or responsibilities. The following sections describe the range of responsibilities to creation, the ancestors, to learners, and to future generations.

AR Is a Sacred Responsibility from the Creator

Often there is a spiritual component to participants' connection to their language work. Perry Bebamash and I were classmates in the Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (KTEI) Anishinaabemowin Immersion certificate program and he is now continuing his studies at Algoma University to become a certified NSL teacher in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Perry taught the language in Kitchener/Waterloo and also tutored me when we were at KTEI. I sought him out for an interview as a young and emerging language teacher who remains a highly motivated learner and participates in ceremonies and drumming. Bebamash explained his motivations for learning Anishinaabemowin as both "listening to my spirit [and] caring about our future. I understand that our language is very important for our people to have their identity, for their wellbeing, to survive here in creation, and to try to sustain a future for ourselves."

When I asked him to elaborate on the connection between identity and language, he answered by emphasizing that language is a sacred gift that he believes came directly from the Creator.

Well from my understanding, this language, learning the truth about our history and stuff, I learned that it was a language given at the time of the creation of our people. So this language is the same language that we've

been using since the time of our creation. That's a big part of identity right there, identity right from the source of the creation. That's probably the main thing that we should be worried about. Other things will fall into place after that if we keep true to our identity. Through the Great Spirit, everything else will fall into place. We'll have no problem identifying ourselves against anybody else that wants to undermine us, or whatever, or if we have any disbelief in ourselves. It comes from, it was given from the Creator they say - a special gift that absolutely identifies the people that were created here in North America.¹²⁶

Bebamash also mentioned the belief that it was Nenaboozhoo, the Anishinaabe culture-hero, who first gave voice to Anishinaabemowin when he named all beings in Creation. Some participants were cautious about discussing the spiritual nature of Anishinaabemowin for Anishinaabeg. For example, Webkamigad was hesitant to talk too much about spiritual significance of the language and stopped short from divulging how language was given to the Anishinaabeg.

My only reason for the importance of language, in my own life, or my own reasoning for it would be because that's what was given. Whoever the first Anishinaabe, whenever the first Anishinaabe came along, when the language first started evolving, when that language was given to those people, that person – some of our people say it was Nanabush. Nanabush was the first Anishinaabe in the stories, the legends, so the language came from him and it was given to him from the big guy, the Creator. There's another story to that, but it's not for this kind of stuff. Anyway, so there's that tie, that relationship to the spirit world. That's one reason to keep the language alive - to keep that tie to that first person who got that language from the spirit, the Great Spirit, the Gzhemnidoo.¹²⁷

Another language teacher from Wikwemikong also saw Anishinaabemowin as a gift from the Creator for which speakers are responsible.

The language keepers, the ones that are carrying the language, they have a huge responsibility to restore that language and I say that they are warriors. Sometimes we call them language gurus (laughter). They should be acknowledged for the kind of work that they are doing. Still

¹²⁶ Bebamash, interview.

¹²⁷ Webkamigad, interview.

*carrying on the language, the responsibility that was given to us by the Creator, and maintaining it and passing it on from one generation to the other.*¹²⁸

Fontaine describes how she was taught by Elders to see language as a sacred connection to ceremonies, history, kinship, and land.

*I guess the starting point is what Elders told me about the language being sacred – I guess that is a better word than spiritual. As you know our ceremonies are conducted in our language. One of the greatest impacts on us is not being able to understand what is being said during our ceremonies. There is translation, but I know there is a big gap in terms of what I actually get from the English version. Part of our birthright is to know our language and be able to pass it on to our children and to be able to communicate with our families, but I also think the values embedded in our creation stories, stories about the land, our identity in terms of stewardship and caring for the land, are derived from the language. I think you can teach somebody values without using the language, but I think for us a critical component of building relationships to one another and expressing our relationships to land is embedded in our language.*¹²⁹

Fontaine is concerned that its absence for non-speakers disrupts the relational and spiritual connections that Indigenous languages provide. “I also think that my ability to pray is impacted. When I pray in English I feel like there is something very integral missing.”¹³⁰ Many participants shared Fontaine’s view that language and spirituality are interconnected and mutually-reinforcing. Learning to speak the language is not only a linguistic, but also a spiritual journey that connects Anishinaabeg to creation.

AR Is a Responsibility to the Ancestors

Darrell Boissoneau is a member of Garden River First Nation and previously served as chief in his community. Currently, he works as the president of

¹²⁸ Williams, interview.

¹²⁹ Fontaine, interview.

¹³⁰ Fontaine, interview.

Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig (SKG) and Shingwauk Education Trust. SKG is a unique institution, offering degrees in Anishinaabemowin and Anishinaabe Studies, housed on the grounds of the former Shingwauk Residential School in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. When I asked him about his involvement in promoting Anishinaabemowin, Boissoneau explained that he is one of many working to realize Shingwauk's vision for Anishinaabe education.

Shingwauk's vision, as we understand it, is to foster and promote education and to provide a new set of skills for our young people and all young people. At the same time, Shingwauk's vision also embraced the idea that it did not mean that we abandon who we are, meaning our culture, language and traditions. It is important for us to be able to speak our language, to still practice our culture and traditions, but learn what the Settler people are bringing here as well. In the 1800's, Shingwauk had seen that there was a dramatic change happening with us so he undertook this great vision...Now we're charged with the task in the late 1990's and now the year 2000's to modernize Shingwauk's vision. It's an honour and indeed a great pleasure for us to be able to do this and we've done a tremendous amount of hard work to get to where we are today. We believe we're on the cusp of something very great and something very historic and that is Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, Shingwauk University.¹³¹

Many other participants are also inspired by the efforts of their ancestors to ensure our future as Anishinaabeg. Although Boissoneau's example speaks of a more distant ancestor, many participants praised their parents and grandparents for giving them the language. This gift comes with the responsibility to pass on the language to others. Ningewance Nadeau is inspired to help revitalize Anishinaabemowin by a love for the language instilled by her grandmother.

My grandmother is the one whose picture painting is on the cover of my book, the gookom that I refer to. She was about 80, late 70s, when she was living with us and was 83 when she died... she spoke perfect English, but she never spoke it in our home. Never. Never did she speak English to us. Just Ojibwe. In fact she used to play word games with us in

¹³¹ Darrell Boissoneau, interview by author, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. October 8, 2008.

*Ojibwe. That's how we in my family, those of us who were her grandchildren, we learned to love our language through her. She used to play riddles and other language games. So why didn't she speak English with us? I think if I asked her she would have said, "Anishinaabeg will speak Anishinaabemowin. The English should speak English. We shouldn't speak English because we're not English." She was my role model in being proud of the language.*¹³²

Many Anishinaabe ancestors were unable to pass on the language because they were subjected to assimilative government education programs. The impacts of these programs on Anishinaabe communities were often cited when participants were explaining personal motivations for becoming involved in AR activities. Fontaine describes how she became involved in researching legal arguments for the protection of Indigenous languages in Canada.

*When I was working on residential school cases in 2000 with a law firm in Toronto I was in discussion with a lot of Aboriginal residential school survivors and one of the main topics that kept coming up was that they wanted to do something with language and culture; meaning that they wanted some kind of compensation, recognition that there was harm, and revitalization efforts around language and culture. And yet the lawyers that were actively involved in the cases would not deal with that issue because there was no law recognizing a legal right to language and culture in Canada. I would say that 90% of the Aboriginal people that I spoke to talked about loss of language and culture. It was very important to them that this issue be dealt with in some way because they saw the effects on their children and their grandchildren and they didn't want to see that the inability to pass on or speak the language continue.*¹³³

Fontaine applies intergenerational responsibility for AR to all Anishinaabeg; whether they learned it as a first language or sought it out as a second language. One ASL learner felt motivated by and responsible to her grandparents to learn Anishinaabemowin.

Our ancestors are ushering us. They're ushering us. Our ancestors are waiting for us to pick up our language bundles. I can feel that my

¹³² Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

¹³³ Fontaine, interview.

*grandparents are waiting for us to do that, for me to do that, and they're being very patient. It's taking a long time.*¹³⁴

AR Is the Speakers' Responsibility to Assist Learners

Many participants feel a responsibility to help others learn Anishinaabemowin. Besides his recruiting and resource development responsibilities at Sault College, Melvin Peltier also assists with its one-year Anishinaabemowin Immersion Certificate program (AIC). The AIC was launched in 2004 and joined in 2007 by an off-site delivery at M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island. Ontario's first postsecondary Anishinaabemowin immersion program was developed in response to community demands to develop Anishinaabemowin proficiency. The two programs have produced 112 graduates in the first four years. When asked how he became involved in AR, Peltier cites his initial involvement as work-related. However, his commitment deepened because his work was fulfilling, and he had an opportunity to share his language with others in order to "give something back."

*The number one thing that motivates me is that I've got the language, I've learned it. I'm at the age now where it's nice to want to give something back to whoever wants to listen or wants to learn it, and try to assist. I've got ideas that I just want to share. I have ways and ideas [for] this sharing of the language to people that want to learn it, to make it a little easier, less stressful upon the people that are trying to learn it. And it's the look in their eyes when they speak at least a phrase without them being shy or being embarrassed.*¹³⁵

Peltier also alluded to a widespread sense of duty or responsibility to the language itself and to the Anishinaabeg. He was raised in Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island and learned Anishinaabemowin as his first language. Peltier

¹³⁴ Kathy Absolon, interview by author, Toronto, Ontario. November 30, 2008.

¹³⁵ Peltier, interview.

takes special pride in developing language activities and materials that are enjoyable and useful for learners and teachers. “Seeing the work I’ve done so far being utilized out there by the teachers is nice. It’s gratifying to see that.”¹³⁶

Nelson Toulouse explained that it is his experience in residential school and his determination to retain his language that have motivated him to help others learn it as well.

*The attempts of government to take your language away, to me, raised a few alarm bells. The alarm bells were: why would they want to do this? And the lengths that they went through to try and take it away made me sort of think, “Well, there must be something really important with language to do that.” For me it had the opposite effect. It didn’t scare me, it made me more resilient and more committed to keep it and learn it. And as I grew in age and got involved in the political field later on I sort of made my own assessment and it’s just viewing where language was going. I thought that my personal assessment of myself and what strengths I have was language. I mean there’s a lot of politicians or Anishinaabe politicians out there. I’m not going to make a difference there, but when it comes to language, sad to say, there’s not a whole lot of me left. So I thought, “Man! If I’m ever going to do something, here’s an area I think which is critically important that I can help in.” So that’s what motivates me.*¹³⁷

There are many fluent speakers who remain reluctant to pass on the language and changing those inhibitions are important for AR to be successful. Barb Nolan encouraged speakers to overcome their hesitancy or reluctance to pass on the language in order for AR to succeed.

*Speakers have got to start speaking the language, no matter where. From my experience, I know that some speakers are afraid to speak the language to an individual who does not understand it because they are scared. “He doesn’t understand the language, so why should I speak the language to him?” But I think once we create that desire in speakers, that they have to pass on their language otherwise it’s going to disappear. I think that’s where my desire is. I must leave the language here.*¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Peltier, interview.

¹³⁷ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

¹³⁸ Nolan, interview.

Ningewance Nadeau agreed with Nolan that speakers have a responsibility to pass on the language to others. “If those of us who speak the language can keep it and maintain it then those who don’t speak it will be motivated to want to learn it in order to understand what everybody is saying. But we have to use it all the time and that’s our challenge.”¹³⁹

AR Is the Learners’ Responsibility to Teach Themselves

A striking feature of many of the ASL learners is the commitment and perseverance in their efforts to recover the language for themselves. Bebamash studied Anishinaabemowin on his own when he came home from taking electronics courses at Conestoga College. His interest in the language also led him to pursue Anishinaabe culture and his independent progress was so impressive that he was approached to teach other ASL learners in Kitchener, Ontario.

I got interested about three years ago while I was away in school at Kitchener. It was something that I was always interested in and I took more of an initiative to learn a few years ago. I started collecting my own resources and studying. I still remembered how to read the Fiero writing system from public school so it wasn't hard for me to start studying on my own. I tried to get other kinds of resources, listening to fluent speakers speak as much as I can, getting videos and audio resources as well. That was starting out in Kitchener like that in my apartment. So I would study Anishinaabemowin in the evenings, on my own, after I would do my college work. I was taking electrical technology there at Conestoga College so after I would do my college work I would start studying Anishinaabemowin and along the lines the culture came along the way. I met a good friend down there in Kitchener, helped me out with the culture. So they go together, they were coming hand in hand and along with the teachings were helping learn more as well, using tobacco and stuff like that. And I also voluntarily taught there in Kitchener at the Anishinaabeg Outreach place there. I voluntarily taught there once a week in the

¹³⁹ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

*evenings for two hours for about six months.*¹⁴⁰

Many participants became involved with AR after taking introductory classes and feeling dissatisfied with the results. Instead of becoming disillusioned and giving up, they took the initiative to direct their own language learning in a variety of creative ways. These methods and strategies, such as creating learning opportunities through theatre, verb charts, and written exercises, will be profiled and discussed in detail in Chapter 3. But participants' reasons for creating self-directed ASL projects deserve initial investigation here.

I was getting frustrated with how I was being taught and what I was learning, and I wanted to take more charge of it, I just had plateaued and I was getting nowhere so I thought okay, I want to get somewhere with this and the only way is if I actually work at this. Funny thing is, one of the teachers that I had would get kind of funny when I would try and help. I think it was, for whatever reason, he was intimidated. Anyway, he ended up quitting, not because of me or anything, he ended up getting another job so then somebody else started ... she was in Toronto there teaching in the Toronto Public School, so she came along. And then I started telling her, she was doing her usual teaching method and then I started saying, "Well why don't we do this? I could help you with this." And she said, "Yeah okay." So we take some of these OCF (Ojibwe Cultural Foundation) books that are stories and I started saying, "Ok, this is a transitive verb." And she doesn't know all the terminology, I learned it through reading.

I would make different exercises for the class. I would take one of the stories...then I would make different questions, like "Aabiish gaa-nzhizhaangzhing nimosh? Where did this dog lie down?" And the answer is, "Maaba nimosh naami-mtigong" because it's in the story...I would just take a sentence and move it around and make a question out of it. So then each person that had the story could actually look in the text and answer it. And then what they are doing is actually learning questions and answers, but also the different forms of the verb because when you put it into a question form it changes from an independent clause to a dependent clause. So that was my first inklings of, if you want to call it

¹⁴⁰ Bebamash, interview.

*teaching, I was more assisting there and helping her, making up the exercises and typing up stuff and then she would run us through it.*¹⁴¹

I am consistently amazed by the dedication and passion that second-language learners who are now teaching Anishinaabemowin have displayed in creating their own ASL opportunities. Kathy Absolon is an Anishinaabe-kwe from Flying Post First Nation in Ontario. She is an ASL learner who has organized Anishinaabemowin language circles in Victoria, British Columbia, Regina, Saskatchewan, and most recently, Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario. In 2004, I joined the Anishinaabemowin language circle that she organized at First Nations University in Regina, Saskatchewan, and Absolon's commitment to learning and helping others to learn with her were a source of inspiration for this study. When I asked her whether she believed AR is possible, even off-reserve, she was emphatically optimistic and explained why.

I live in an urban center and I'm just doing it. You know one of the problems that sometimes happens is the organizations are not really functioning the way they could be to their potential. So the politics, the funding, and the mandate, interfactionalism, arguing unfortunately happens and that creates a real barrier to things being developed. So in Kitchener Waterloo where I live now, there wasn't really anything happening with language and so, I don't care. I just want to do it and that's my motto, you just have to do it. And so I just said, "Well I'm just going to do it at my house." And some people said to me, "Well maybe you should go to the outreach centre or the resource centre and try to get something started there." And I said, "No, I'm the one that's responsible for my language, I'm the one responsible to pick it up. I'm not going to pass it on to an organization to do that, I'm going to do that and I'm going to find other people that want to do that and we're going to do it at my house. If the organization wanted to do that, they would have done it by now." It would be there because – it is not [that] people don't know – I think we've heard it enough from our Elders and the traditional people that organizations know that that's important.

¹⁴¹ Alan Corbiere, interview by author, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Ontario. October 7, 2008.

So my feeling is now I'm just going to do it, I'm not going to get bogged down in the bureaucracy of an organization. And we're just meeting at my house and we're having tea and we're just sitting around my kitchen table. It's very grassroots. It's very informal, but we're learning it. And we're picking it up. ... My job for myself, I just continue to be consistent. So every Wednesday, I'm doing Anishinaabemowin, whether I'm there by myself listening to the tapes or whether I'm there with one person. Even if one person is there, I still pull out the tapes, I still pull out the CDs, and I'll say, "What do you want to do? Which one do you want to do? It's not like, "Well we don't have enough people here." If I'm there, to me, it's my spirit, it's my job, it's my responsibility. The more people that come, the better."¹⁴²

There are many other creative examples of ASL teaching that will be profiled in the following chapter. For now, we continue with this theme of responsibility for AR with the essential responsibility of any language: intergenerational transmission to future generations.

AR Is a Responsibility to Future Generations

Many Anishinaabeg speak of the need, when making important decisions, to think ahead seven generations to determine their impact. Howard Webkamigad invokes the "Seven Generations" responsibility to explain why teaching the language matters to him.

And also another reason to keep the language alive [is] they always talk about seven generations. We're responsible for seven generations. So I'm responsible for myself and my generation and six more to follow. So those people six generations ago, most of them are probably thinking now, "We didn't do a good job." Because most of the people at the seventh generation from them don't have the language anymore, so they're feeling they didn't do a good job, you know, all those previous generations didn't do a good job. So what's my generation, the six to follow me, what will [or] who will those people be like? Will they speak the language or will they just be able to say words from a list? I don't know but my hope is we can turn this language loss issue around and start getting people speaking it again. Whatever dialect it is, whatever dialect, as long as they speak it so

¹⁴² Absolon, interview.

*eventually maybe some day we'll have speakers again.*¹⁴³

Many participants want AR to occur not only for themselves, but especially for their families. Liz Osawamick is a language teacher for both adults and children and currently resides in Peterborough, Ontario. She moved from Manitoulin Island where she was raised by fluent speakers on the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve. She went through a period where she felt that she had almost lost her language, but she became involved in AR to help her children to learn the language because she was determined “it had to be revived back.”

*I've been teaching the Native language for about 15 years. I took it upon myself to go back to school to go and get my diploma on the Native Language [Instructors] Program offered at Lakehead University. I wanted to teach my children and I wanted to learn how to write it. That's why I went back to school.*¹⁴⁴

Alan Corbiere is an Anishinaabe scholar and teacher who did his graduate work on Anishinaabemowin in Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto and currently works for the Ojibway Cultural Foundation at M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. He is a highly-accomplished ASL learner and someone I turn to for advice when I need guidance with my own progress. He has taught Anishinaabemowin for Laurentian University and provided language tutoring for students at Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (KTEI). When I was attending the KTEI immersion program, he and his wife Tammy invited the students for a weekly “culture club” gathering at their home. I asked Corbiere about how he became involved in language scholarship and teaching.

¹⁴³ Webkamigad, interview.

¹⁴⁴ Liz Osawamick, interview by author, Peterborough, Ontario. October 9, 2008.

This really was the clincher. My wife and I got together and we were expecting our first child. Once that happened, I thought to myself, "All my ancestors, my mom and dad, my grandparents on both sides could speak Ojibwe all the way back to the beginning of time. And now here I'm going to bring a child into this world and I'm the one who's responsible to pass that language on and I can't, because I don't know how to speak it." So that's when I decided I'm going to actually try and pass this language on, by me learning, and then passing it on.

So I used to read these books. And there's linguists, John Nichols, I used to like reading a lot of his stuff because it was mostly stories and then he'd put the theory stuff in the back. There was one book, Maude Kegg's Portage Lake: Memories of an Ojibwe Childhood. So I used to read stories – Tam would be laying in bed – and I'd read those stories to the baby in that time. Each time after that I used to do that as well, try and do that, I wasn't too good at it at first, but then after I could really read well and I could read those stories to them. So that was the main impetus at that point.¹⁴⁵

Along with the AR requests she heard while working with residential school survivors, Fontaine was similarly inspired by the birth of her daughter.

I guess the other part to this is that I have a child now - she's two, I want her to be able to learn the language and to have access to schools that will enable her to learn the language. I had the dream in the back of my mind that it would open the door for immersion schools to be funded by the government down the road.¹⁴⁶

Fontaine describes how language was included during the preparations for the birth of her daughter according to guidance from Elders in her mothers' community of Opaskwayak in northern Manitoba.

I think one of the important aspects of language revitalization is re-establishing a healthy relationship to the language, which is critical to sustaining it. If we feel good about speaking the language perhaps it will empower other families to speak it and to pass it on. One thing that I did before the birth of my daughter – I approached Elders about what I needed to do in preparation for the birthing process. I was told when my daughter was born she needed to hear our language. So we made sure that my mother was the first one to hold her and to greet her in Cree because I wanted my daughter to have a healthy relationship to our

¹⁴⁵ Corbiere, interview.

¹⁴⁶ Fontaine, interview.

language. I was told that one of the four gifts that we have is language. It is a spiritual language because the Creator speaks to us in our language before we are born into this life so when a child is born they already know their language is part of their identity. The language is part of their spirit. I cannot teach my daughter the language myself, but I feel that I have set her on the right path.¹⁴⁷

Fontaine's personal example weaves together several important themes that many AR participants cite as motivating their work: cultural pride, healing, kinship, and spirit. These themes will be explored further in the following section on AR restoration.

Restoration

AR Restores Pride in Being Anishinaabe

Many participants emphasize that learning Anishinaabemowin fortifies an Anishinaabe identity. Both first-language speakers and ASL learners shared this view. Alan Corbiere explained how he first developed a desire to learn the language while living in Toronto. He came from a long line of fluent speakers on both sides of his family, but only gradually became interested in learning the language as an adult.

But all my aunts and uncles that I can remember anishinaabemok. My nooshenhk, mishoomek could speak Ojibwe, and my grandparents mishoomis, mishoomisibaa, nookmisibaa gii-anishinaabemok, they spoke the language. So when I left here, I didn't really care, you know, you're just the typical teenager, you don't really care about the language, the old people. You get the message. And this particular organization that I work for now, the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation and Lakeview School, they did inculcate that in the curriculum that, "Yes we still want to impart language, Ojibwe language, to the students, to our citizenry." But when you're going to school, you're not really thinking of that. You just participate. When you go to high school then you're concerned with different things, popularity, fitting in, sports, the opposite sex and stuff like that. So I didn't really care about all that, the language or identity or anything like that and

¹⁴⁷ Fontaine, interview.

it was only when I moved away and that I was in Toronto... eventually other M'Chigeeng people moved in with us too and so we had a little M'Chigeeng commune down in Toronto there. It was around that time that I started thinking about language and I met some people in the city there, we were in a bar mnikwegamigoong ngii-gweshkwaa'ige niiji-Anishinaabek, I met my fellow Nishnabs in the bar. Some of them were older gii-anishinaabe-taadok and they started speaking to each other. And then I was saying I wanted to learn that and I really identified that as a real Anishinaabe - somebody who could speak the language.¹⁴⁸

Corbiere admired how many different ethnic communities in Toronto had retained their languages. “Amongst all the diversity, well here I am, an Anishinaabe in this place and maybe I should be able to speak my language too, but at that time at the University of Toronto there was no language program. There was no Native Studies or Aboriginal Studies.”¹⁴⁹ The lack of ASL opportunities in Toronto contributed to his decision to move back to his reserve on Manitoulin Island so his children would have the opportunity to learn.

First language speakers also frequently associate Anishinaabe identity and language. Ningewance Nadeau believes that Anishinaabeg youth are suffering identity crises because they have been raised without speaking Anishinaabemowin.

I think learning the language would help our young people. I think they are lost. I think that would help them find their way home – speaking and learning the language of their ancestors.¹⁵⁰

Mary Young is Anishinaabe-kwe from Miskooseepi First Nation in Manitoba and an Education professor at the University of Winnipeg. She is also the author of *Pimatisiwin – A Narrative Inquiry Into Language as Identity* (2005). The book emerged from her doctoral dissertation that explores the connection

¹⁴⁸ Corbiere, interview.

¹⁴⁹ Corbiere, interview.

¹⁵⁰ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

between Anishinaabe identity and Anishinaabemowin. Her doctoral research consisted of qualitative interviews with two Anishinaabeg youth who described their struggles to learn Anishinaabemowin while living in Winnipeg. In our interview, Young emphasized the need to restore pride in the language and ourselves. She described how residential school shifted her identity from a proud Anishinaabe to a denigrated urban Indian and how this affected her willingness to speak Anishinaabemowin.

I hid it because I wasn't proud - I guess I was still feeling the shame. It wasn't until - it was years later - when I started observing students using English all the time, but also knowing that they spoke the language so I started speaking it downstairs in the student lounge. It was just my way little by little to make them feel comfortable - that it was okay to speak language.¹⁵¹

Many participants emphasized this need to restore a sense of pride in the language in order for it to be widely spoken once again. Young contrasts Anishinaabe reluctance to speak with new immigrant communities' willingness to create new linguistic communities in Canadian cities. She advocates restoring that cultural and linguistic pride to support urban AR. Young believes the turning point for her occurred when she went home to her reserve and impressed her family by speaking Anishinaabemowin while addressing a community gathering.

When I got up I think I shocked a few people. I began with my language because there is this perception that if you leave the community, you become somebody else and you stop speaking your language. All of my sisters and brothers said they were proud of me. So that's how it sort of started - it helped me realize how important that was so I felt it was important for other people. I also knew that shame was there. So that's how I began.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Mary Young, interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba. August 15, 2008.

¹⁵² Young, interview.

For Young, it was helping students feel comfortable speaking Indigenous languages that was key to creating the environment necessary for them to flourish in Winnipeg.

AR Heals and Protects

Many participants commented on AR's healing properties. Maya Chacaby coordinates language activities through her work at the University of Toronto where she is also a student. Chacaby credits an Anishinaabe language teacher she met at the Native Canadian Centre for inspiring her to begin university. A mutual friend introduced us via email because of our shared interest in AR, and our interview took place at a language camp hosted by Ningewance Nadeau on her home reserve at Lac Seul First Nation. Chacaby was in the midst of a summer-long research project of traveling to different communities and events in Ontario where she would record various AR role models so she could return with their stories to Toronto in order to inspire and motivate language students there.

When I asked Chacaby about her AR work she began with a personal account of how learning her ancestral language has brought about both personal and family healing.

I think to start that answer I have to say a little about how I got here to begin with because it's all one long story. My grandmother who raised me was a residential school survivor and she had a very difficult time over there in residential school and really took a lot of their teachings and brought it into our family. So we were not allowed to speak Ojibwe at all. In fact we were punished anytime we tried out some of the words. Even though I heard the language around me we were not allowed to speak it. So I always carried this question in my journey about the language and why it was such a bad thing. And then I ran away at a very young age, I think I was about 13, and went through all kinds of things living on the street and really never had a chance to articulate my growing up experiences in a way that made sense. And later [I] realized that part of

*the reason I couldn't talk about it or do the healing I needed to do was because I didn't have the language. And I didn't have the way of seeing the world and the way of thinking about the world that I needed to do that healing. As an adult and after I got off the street and started that healing journey I always knew that the language was important.*¹⁵³

When I asked Chacaby to elaborate on this concept of language as healing she shared the following personal example of how she experienced and understood this healing process.

*I met this woman Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux. She wrote a book about trauma in Aboriginal communities being not just something that is experienced in the present, but something that has been transmitted from generation to generation to generation.*¹⁵⁴ *She used the term - it's somebody else's term, but she applied it to our communities: historic trauma transmission. I really believe that, in my life and my history, with my grandmother's story, my mother's story, and my father's story that there is a lot that has been pushed through each generation from 500 years ago. I think it has continued and the pain and the shame and the anger and the hurt are part of that. I think that a lot of it is in terms of what has been taken away from us. And culture, it will never be taken away from us because it's in us, but we need to use it.*

*The one way to use our culture and the one way to become strong with the culture is with the language. When I think of language as healing I think of it as healing in a historic sense. All the shame that my grandmother had about the language was given to me and now I carry that shame for her. So for me, I want to, even though she's gone, I want to do that healing with her [for what] she went through with residential school and her language was taken away from her. And in a way I often saw her as already being dead even though she was alive. Her spirit was badly harmed. I need to do that healing with her, with her spirit.*¹⁵⁵

Williams is an award-winning professor of Anishinaabemowin at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, who also became involved in AR because she believed in its potential to heal Anishinaabe youth. She is originally from Wikwemikong

¹⁵³ Maya Chacaby, interview by author, Lac Seul First Nation, Ontario. August 05, 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Magdalena Smolewski, *Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing* (Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004).

¹⁵⁵ Chacaby, interview.

Unceded Indian Reserve and, in her interview, she recalled how tragedy struck her family and community in 1974.

I was living on the reserve and one of my nephews committed suicide. Not only my own nephew, but there was a lot of young people committing suicide. They had an Elder come from out west to come and talk about suicides and what was happening. There was something happening in our community. We didn't know why these young people would take their lives. This nephew came to my home the night before he committed suicide, and I've always wondered, "Did I say anything? Did I have any indications that he was feeling bad? Did I do enough?" You ask all these questions. "Why wasn't I aware? Did he come to visit me to tell me and did I not pay attention?" All these things were going through my head.

When the Elder came, I decided to attend the meeting. The Elder there was talking and it really hit home for me because in this lecture towards the end he said what he was hearing was that no longer were our children learning to speak the language in their community. They were forgetting their values. They're forgetting their culture. It made me really think. And then he turned around and he pointed to all the people who were there and he said, "To all the people who know the language and know the culture, what are you doing about it?"

That just hit home and I thought, "Yeah, I know a little bit of my own culture, I know a little bit of my own language and I haven't done anything." Then a voice came into my head, which was my mother's voice, she used to say, "What are you going to tell the creator when you leave this world and answer him what have you done for your community?" I thought about that and I thought, "I haven't done anything to help my community in any way. If I know my own language and culture, at least I can contribute. I haven't done anything about it." So I decided to go back to school. That's what motivated me to go back to school. I came to school here at Trent University and from thereafter everything led to language.¹⁵⁶

Shirley Williams' moving description of the suicide epidemic that swept through her community is a reminder of the enormous social costs of unresolved historical trauma.¹⁵⁷ Many Anishinaabeg continue to believe that we can protect

¹⁵⁶ Williams, interview.

¹⁵⁷ Williams' belief is backed up by a recent study that found a correlation between language loss and youth suicide on First Nations reserves. Darcy Hallett, Michael J.

one another when we speak Anishinaabemowin because the language carries embedded values and wisdom that young people require in order to have strong cultural roots that will sustain them.

AR Restores Community In Colonizing Spaces

Many participants also spoke about how Anishinaabemowin has intrinsic qualities that promote harmony and a sense of well-being. Chacaby saw Anishinaabemowin as her connection to her family's home community of Kaministikwa near Thunder Bay. She described the family home and commented on how "there is something there that makes me feel alive and full and connected and healthy, spiritually, physically, emotionally and mentally. There is something there that that community does to help me be that good person that I want to be." Yet this protective community connection would become strained whenever she returned to Toronto where she studies and works.

The longer I am in the city the more that part of me dissipates. So I have to constantly go back, be on the land, be with the Elders, to get that back and I worry sometimes for people who might not have that kind of community to go to. And for me, I get that same feeling of being filled up and full when I am speaking the language. So to be in an urban setting and still have an emotional, spiritual, mental and physically healthy life, I have to have the language. So that's why I think it's important to have our languages in the urban centres. It builds community, it makes you healthy, and helps you still think about the world the way you do when you are in the bush.¹⁵⁸

Chandler and Christopher E. Lalonde, "Aboriginal Language Knowledge and Youth Suicide," *Cognitive Development* 22, no. 3 (2007): 392-399.

¹⁵⁸ Chacaby, interview.

Chacaby saw the emerging AR community at the University of Toronto as another source of healing energy that supported her while studying and working away from home.

The more I am involved in building a language community the more I feel filled up in the city. I am a university student right now and that's a very difficult place to be emotionally and spiritually – it is very draining. So in a way, the language is a defense for me against getting all of that negative information. And when you build that language community it is always full of humour and is always fun. It helps the healing.¹⁵⁹

Bebamash described a similar motivation to concentrate on learning Anishinaabemowin after initially training to be an electrician at an Ontario college. After experiencing racism working in his new field, he decided to focus on his own people and began retraining to be an ASL teacher.

Another thing that sort of led me to come this way was racism. I went to school for a diploma and I graduated with good grades. I met racism right in the school from the teachers there, but I still ended up getting good grades and getting my diploma. Working in the work field after that, a lot of the employers weren't very, how would you put it, accommodative? Just didn't really care to have Native people around in their businesses. I got let go from a few jobs there for no reason. I could hear employers and supervisors making remarks about Native people. So I decided to work for my own people. And it was good that it happened. I like what I'm doing now. I never want to work for a white man again, hopefully (laughter).¹⁶⁰

Both Bebamash and Chacaby found that AR creates a supportive space for their personal growth as young Anishinaabeg while also allowing them to give back to their communities. Isadore Toulouse similarly explained his involvement with language teaching stems from his belief that Anishinaabemowin has inherent

¹⁵⁹ Chacaby, interview.

¹⁶⁰ Bebamash, interview.

restorative power to unite not only families, but communities and entire peoples, “I think language is what holds us together as First Nation people.”¹⁶¹

AR Transforms and Restores Relationships

Many participants who began learning Anishinaabemowin later in life mentioned feelings of alienation and disconnection from family members who were speakers. Absolon recalled feeling confused and left out that she could not speak her relatives’ language when she was a child.

Always, when my grandparents would come to visit us, my kookomis and mishoomis, they spoke in Ojibwe. If my kookomis was around with other great aunts, they were always speaking in Anishinaabe, and I couldn't understand them. And I would sit there and I would see them laugh and I would laugh at the same time they were laughing, but I didn't really know what they were laughing about. I often wondered what they were saying and I felt kind of bad that I didn't understand my own grandmother and I couldn't communicate with her the way that I feel a granddaughter should be able to communicate with her grandparents.¹⁶²

Lorena Fontaine also described how language was a barrier between her and her grandparents.

Another impact is the barrier between me and my family. My grandmother spoke only Cree, she didn't speak English, and my grandfather only very rarely spoke English so I was not able to establish a relationship with them because I couldn't communicate with them.¹⁶³

Fontaine realized that, looking back, she instinctively understood even as a child that a language barrier between a granddaughter and her grandparents was wrong, yet this phenomenon is so common for Indigenous families that “it is almost normal.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

¹⁶² Absolon, interview.

¹⁶³ Fontaine, interview.

¹⁶⁴ Fontaine, interview.

Chacaby described how she has initiated a new relationship with her mother by learning from and speaking the language with her. She believed that others can experience this transformative power in their families if they engage one another in Anishinaabemowin.

My grandmother was the one who was very punishing, and then I went and lived with my mom later in my life. She's a fluent speaker and she refused to speak to me in Ojibwe. So for those of you who are in a similar situation as my mom, I just want to tell you, how, as she is breaking out of her shell and talking to me because I haven't given up - I have bugged her for ten years now and finally she is starting to use whole phrases that are not me getting in trouble (laughter), she is starting to really talk to me. I put my answering machine messages in Ojibwe so when she calls me and hears the Ojibwe she automatically starts to speak it. For those parents out there who are fluent speakers I just want to tell you how much deeper my relationship with my mom is now that she is speaking to me and how much healing has happened between us. We only fight in English. We only have a hard time in English. When we are together speaking Ojibwe, there is so much love and so much warmth and connection there and healing for both of us. That was never there before, so I just want to share that.¹⁶⁵

Many research participants spoke about how Anishinaabemowin reminds them of their parents, grandparents, and other family members.

For me, speaking in my language is just a preferred way that I would like to express myself. It is the preferred way that I would like to express myself because it is the way my parents expressed themselves, it is the way my grandmother expressed herself. And if I can express myself in the same way, in phrasing things the way they did, using the kinds of words they did, showing the kind of humour they had. ... I guess it just maintains that continuity, that rootedness. "This is where I came from, these are the people that I came from. These were their loves, their frustrations, these were their challenges. What I feel, they also felt."¹⁶⁶

In the same way that the language reconnects us to our families, Naokwegijig-Corbiere believed that language unites Anishinaabeg as a people. Speaking the language reinforces these ancestral connections between us.

¹⁶⁵ Chacaby, interview.

¹⁶⁶ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

It might sound trivial, I'm not saying the only thing different is the way we express ourselves. But for me, that's a big deal. Expression is so much. That's the ultimate expression of your identity, your way of doing things, your way of expressing yourself. That's you. That reflects where you come from. It also reflects on other things that have shaped you. Of course we've been shaped by our life experiences and certain other contexts. We express ourselves to achieve certain purposes in particular contexts... When you're a member of a Native community, expressing yourself in the language is an integral part of using the language – again, reinforcing those connections that we share something, that we are not two different people. It reinforces the sense of peoplehood, that, although some of us are traditional, we go to the sweatlodge, some of us are teachers in a mainstream school system, some of us are lawyers, some of us are professors. In spite of those kinds of differences among us as Native people, we all have that commonality as well. We all come from the same set of descendants that formed, in my case, Wiky, in your case, that formed Waagwaaskinigaa. So although we might do different things, we are a people, and that's where that connection is to peoplehood and that's where that was really helpful to me... Language permits a cohesive expression of peoplehood.¹⁶⁷

Other participants agreed that Anishinaabemowin had transformative power to restore relationships at the community level whether on or off-reserve.

Ningewance Nadeau believed that teaching Anishinaabemowin to urban youth would have a positive effect on their values.

I would really like to see the language learned in the city by especially the youth because I think when you speak the language you internalize the values of what our people believed in. Certainly in my childhood we were different because we spoke our language. We had respect for our parents, our grandparents, our uncles, and other adults. It was just engrained.¹⁶⁸

Nelson Toulouse explained that he was motivated to revitalize

Anishinaabemowin because the language and Anishinaabe community values are connected.

Well what motivates me is I know the importance of language and historically I can look back. I'm at a certain age now and I can look back a

¹⁶⁷ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

¹⁶⁸ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

few decades (laughter). In my own time as a child growing up the environment was so different. We might have had our difficulties as a people and as communities. We've made advancements, but when I go back to that time it was different, and I really relish the environment that existed in terms of language and remembering how people used to be very community orientated and talk about everyday issues. To me when the whole thing was conducted in the language it was a different world and personally I miss that world. I do maybe share that world with people my age, but the dynamics have changed so much. I think back and in those days nobody locked their house. Everybody looked after each other. So there's that sense of value I think we've lost. Well is it part of the language? I believe it is.¹⁶⁹

Conclusion

This chapter explored reasons why a growing number of Anishinaabeg have devoted themselves to revitalizing their ancestral language. Many are motivated because they see the language in decline, but realize that little is being done to revive it. Others become involved with AR because they enjoy or need the work. Many participants conceptualize their involvement in terms of responsibilities to creation, the ancestors and future generations. Others learn or pass on the language as a personal responsibility to their students or themselves. Finally, many participants see Anishinaabemowin's restoration as a means to many ends: strengthened identities, families, communities, as well as healing for the historical traumas suffered in residential schools. In the next chapter, I will look at how these inspired and motivated Anishinaabeg have sought to reverse language shift away from English and back to their ancestral language.

¹⁶⁹ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

Chapter Three: Strategies and Methods for Anishinaabemowin Revitalization

The previous chapter suggested two broad conceptual categories to understand the motivations of research participants for Anishinaabemowin Revitalization (AR): responsibilities and restoration. This chapter looks at how Anishinaabeg are fulfilling those responsibilities by restoring Anishinaabemowin to prominence at home, at school, and at work. There are two strategies being employed in AR that deal specifically with language revitalization methods: (1) adapt and innovate Anishinaabemowin as a second language (ASL) teaching methods; and (2) develop AR institutions, programs and resources. Each strategy is comprised of a variety of methods that will be introduced and explained in an Anishinaabe context.

Adapt and Innovate ASL Teaching Methods

Anishinaabemowin teachers who have been teaching for a prolonged period recognize that there are fewer students coming into their classes with prior exposure to the language. This has required a shift from teaching reading and writing in Anishinaabemowin to already fluent or near-fluent speakers, toward an ASL teaching approach to non-speakers. Alan Corbiere described the tension between adapting existing second language teaching methods developed by non-Anishinaabeg and trying to innovate new Anishinaabemowin pedagogies.

...[ASL] teachers work hard and some of the students are working hard, but what I honestly think, I should just say it to them, but you don't want to upset them. They've got the wrong method! And they're just banging their heads against the wall because... everyone wants to reinvent the wheel.

They think that there's an Anishinaabe method to learning language, but the white man has gone all over the world and learned about language: how language is learned, how language is taught, how language is acquired and how language is used. Surely what they've done we're able to incorporate, but that almost seems like a sin to an Anishinaabe to say, "Yes, I'll take something that this white man has learned, a method that he learned and applied." For some reason there's a real, well I understand it, there's a real resistance to that, it's because it comes from a Zhaagnaash who've taken so much from us.¹⁷⁰

Many teachers spoke at length about how they have structured their curriculum in order to accommodate students who do not already understand Anishinaabemowin grammar or vocabulary. Howard Webkamigad carefully explained in his interview how he has crafted a program that does not overwhelm beginners. He starts with intransitive verbs, which are the most grammatically predictable, and then gradually adds inflections for negatives or to change the tense. In second year, students learn how to conjugate the much more complex transitive verbs. The second year is dedicated to inanimate or "maanda" transitive verbs, and third year covers the animate or "maaba" transitive verbs. Because there are two genders (also referred to as Animacy or Inanimacy), students must memorize which nouns are animate and which are inanimate. First language speakers have already internalized the grammar and implicitly understand its conjugation rules so that they choose the correct verb automatically. For ASL learners, however, determining animacy or inanimacy takes conscious effort and memorization. Webkamigad also challenges students by getting them to translate Anishinaabemowin stories to develop their comprehension and writing skills.

The reason I try teach it this way is years back... one of the people came

¹⁷⁰ Corbiere, interview.

up to me and said “Hey I went to school some place on the island. I took 12 years of language.” He had the language from grade one all the way to grade 12. And he said, “I can't speak it. I could give you a word list,” he said. And he named things off and sounded real good when he was saying the words word by word. But he can't put them in a sentence. So that's what got me started thinking about, “How? What can we do?” So that's what I try and do. I try and show them how people talk so that when they read the story they can see the flow, they can pick up on the flow of the language. Hopefully if they go on to learn the language or try to learn it at least they'll have a background. They'll have an understanding of how the language tends to work.”¹⁷¹

His impressive curriculum development is widely used by other teachers, but he notes that he has yet to see one of his students become a fluent speaker.

I've been here since 1993 at Algoma University College, now it's Algoma University. I've been teaching the language here ever since. I've developed five courses that are language specific... but with five courses, nobody's going to learn how to speak it. My hope is that they undertake to get a basic understanding on how the language works.”¹⁷²

Many other ASL teachers expressed similar disappointment that learners are not getting enough language to progress to proficiency. This has led many AR participants to look beyond conventional second language teaching to explore more recent developments such as immersion.

Immerse Learners in Anishinaabemowin

Immersion methods of language instruction have become increasingly popular and many Indigenous peoples are implementing them in their communities.

Anishinaabeg are beginning to follow in the footsteps of the documented international Indigenous immersion successes of the Maori in New Zealand.

Isadore Toulouse cited immersion programs as hopeful signs for the language's survival because they are “crucial parts of retaining, regaining, revitalizing our

¹⁷¹ Webkamigad, interview.

¹⁷² Webkamigad, interview.

language.”¹⁷³ His enthusiasm is widely shared in the field of Indigenous language education.

*Immersion teaching methods have shown a marked improvement over earlier language teaching approaches, such as the older grammar translations and audiolingual methods. The central characteristic of immersion is the teaching of language, content, and culture in combination – without the use of the child’s first language. Students are taught a second language they initially do not understand, through the use of a variety of context clues provided by the teacher.*¹⁷⁴

Barb Nolan initially modeled her Anishinaabemowin course upon the French second language courses at her school.

*I sort of followed along with what the French teacher was doing. Actually, I borrowed her book, her curriculum and transposed all that she was doing into Anishinaabemowin. I also went to see her in her class to see how she was doing it. That’s how I proceeded with my class at that time.*¹⁷⁵

Nolan gradually adjusted her approach to teaching and was influenced by her students to try a different approach than the standard second language model.

About six years ago I was introduced to immersion instruction where I do not have to teach. I don’t teach the language or about the language. I simply pass on the language through storytelling, through some kind of activity that I do in the classroom. All the while, I am speaking the language. I speak to any students I have in the language wherever I see them, not just in the classroom. At break time, I stay in the language, out in the community, if I see them at a store, I stay in the language because

¹⁷³ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

¹⁷⁴ Jon Allan Reyhner, *Contemporary Native American Issues: Education and Language Restoration* (Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House, 2006), 89. Reyhner explains that immersion language teaching emerged in Canada when anglophone parents in Quebec were concerned that new language laws passed to support French language-use would disadvantage their children. The program was so successful that it has since become an international model for Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

Since the success of French immersion programs in Quebec, the programs have become increasingly popular. Test scores show that immersion students can learn the same academic content as students in English Only classrooms, along with a second language, without losing fluency in English. As immersion students proceed together through school, they also develop a strong sense of camaraderie and often form a ‘values community’ that reflects the positive aspects of the language and culture they are learning (90).

¹⁷⁵ Nolan, interview.

they are a student of mine and every minute counts. I believe that the more you hear the language, your minutes all add up and soon you'll reach a point where you'll be understanding the language up to 100% before spontaneous speech starts coming... What happened was that I was teaching at a community college across in Michigan and the students that I had there were learning about the language. Of course, I was teaching verbs and nouns and all that sort of thing. A group of three students came to see me and they wanted me not to teach the language. They told me, "We want to speak the language. We don't want to learn. We know all about it; all about the verbs and all about the nouns and it's not helping us. We've been at it many years and we want to speak the language and here is a book that will help you." I was a little scared. This was early in January about six years ago. I was a little scared because I didn't think I would be able to do that. The book that was handed to me was Second Language Acquisition: The Natural Approach by Steven Krashen.¹⁷⁶ That book has helped me a great deal to do what I am doing right now in my immersion instruction; passing on the language, using comprehensible input. That is showing people while I am talking, what I am saying with my hands, my facial expressions, everything that I have. My hands, big ball, big box. I use my hands, my facial expressions. I draw. I use tangible things in my class so that the class can see and hear what I am talking about. They see and hear what I am saying and then they catch the gist of it and that's the name of the game. As long as you catch the gist of what the speaker is saying, you are filling up your language acquisition device.¹⁷⁷

Isadore Toulouse was also optimistic about immersion's effectiveness. He declared that immersion programs that involve Elders and other fluent speakers are the "the only way the language will come back."

Making use of the speakers that speak the language, making use of those people that really want to learn the language and teaching them the context of the language. You can't learn a language by simply using vocabulary, table, chair, floor, house, and roof. You can't learn Ojibwe well. You can learn the simple vocabulary of all those words, but you need to learn the context of how to make use of those words. "This is a

¹⁷⁶ Stephen Krashen is the co-author of *The Natural Approach* along with Tracy Terrell. The natural approach to language learning seeks to develop oral proficiency through immersion teaching in a relaxed and student-friendly environment. Interesting and relevant language lessons are intended to convey meaning by using gestures and visual aids. Grammar rules, reading, and writing are not taught until students have already learned the second language as they have previously learned their first language. Reyhner, *Contemporary Native American*, 91-92.

¹⁷⁷ Nolan, interview.

table,” “Doopwin maanda,” “pabwin maanda,” “nini awa.” “Okay that is a man,” “This is a chair,” “This is a table.” How do you continue to make the context of those sentences so people are able to understand, so people are able to continue on those sentences?¹⁷⁸

Mary Ann Naokwegijig-Corbiere agreed with Isadore Toulouse that immersion is required to move beyond teaching simple nouns and verbs. She believes that it is the best way for ASL learners to internalize Anishinaabemowin grammar.

Although I think it’s inevitable, that, especially when we are bilingual, we unconsciously make our Anishinaabemowin sentences conform to English patterns more than we sometimes realize. But ideally, from immersion the learner would internalize ways of expressing thoughts that are natural to our language, natural to Anishinaabemowin. They’re not force fitting Anishinaabemowin into an English way of expressing thoughts. And so much of the language, I mean, an aspect of immersion is easy when you are dealing with concrete things: “Minikwen aniibiishaaboo, mon cake, nboop ge te.” These are concrete things, tea and cake and soup. And with movement and gesturing and what not, the learner quickly, much more quickly than in a book like the kinds we’re producing, can connect to what he or she needs to say to offer things to people or to ask for things if he or she needs to ask for things.¹⁷⁹

Naokwegijig-Corbiere described how the nuances of Anishinaabemowin can be difficult for second language learners to acquire if the mode of instruction is in English instead of immersion.

But so many of the words in a language are not referring to concrete things that you can pick up and touch or see. They’re abstract ideas. And these are the kinds of things I’ve gotten into and grapple with when I’m trying to finish this darn dictionary I’ve been working on for years. Something like the word “anyway” which is used so many ways in English, like “I don’t care” – “Do it anyway you want, I don’t care,” as opposed to, “Anyway, I was sitting there,” you know? And for adult learners, I don’t know how long it takes people, at some point, the ideal is that they break away from thinking in English first and then translating. For many, they rely on that, that’s like their lifeline to sanity when they’re thrown into immersion because they’re trying to connect these arbitrary sounds, what sounds like gobbledygook to you, to something that you can understand and decode. “Okay, what am I supposed to be doing, is he saying to have

¹⁷⁸ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

¹⁷⁹ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

some cake, or is he telling me, don't have any cake?" It's inevitable that they try to translate first. But, so even with something like cake, a concrete noun like that as opposed to an abstract idea, how the heck do you get across these abstract ideas and you get this thing where, "Well this time she said "Maanoo" and that time she said "Booch?" And this is one of the papers that I ended up presenting at the Algonquian conference some years ago and again I'm always working from translation mode. Like if somebody has this thing where "I'm going to go anyway," "Booch go ngazhaa," in one instance that makes better sense. In another instance, an Anishinaabemowin speaker will come out automatically with "Maano go ngazhaa." And if they ask me what those mean, I'll say, "They both mean, 'I'm going anyway.'" But that particular one, we have to use one of two ways and "booch" only works for one reason of saying it and "maanoo" only works for another reason for saying "I'm going anyway."¹⁸⁰

Naokwegijig-Corbiere's examples emphasized the importance of ensuring that immersion language teaching includes abstract concepts that permit ASL learners to not only speak, but also "think" in Anishinaabemowin.

And how do you get that kind of non-concrete idea? How does a learner begin to be able use those things as well, effectively, to not confuse "booch" and "maanoo," knowing that they both mean "anyway?" "So I guess they're synonyms?" No, in Anishinaabemowin, they're not synonyms. But presumably with a good number of people for the student to see these things being said, they can infer, well, in that case, it's not a conscious definition or explanation. My sense is that they would just know that, in that context, "booch" is apparently the one to use, and in that context, "maanoo" is apparently the one to use. And then they begin to use those kinds of things more appropriately.

Same thing with the word "but" or "though" – "although." We have "shwiigo" and "swiigo." I think "shwiigo" is a contraction of "dash wiigo" and I think "swiigo" is a contraction of "sa wiigo." And again, there's times when definitely "shwiigo" makes the better sense, and times and other contexts when "swiigo" makes categorically better sense. Don't ask me how I know that; I just know. And how the heck would the learner pick that up? Hopefully in immersion, in hearing these things, they would gradually get the hang of it and they'd have "shwiigo" popping out of their mouth at the appropriate time and they'd have "swiigo" popping out of their mouth at the appropriate time in another remark. And so, yeah, I think immersion is the best hope always.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

¹⁸¹ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

Barb Nolan emphasized the importance of creating an immersion language environment that ensures learners' comprehension as well.

I tell the students not to look for words. They might sit there and hear somebody speaking and they might go, "Oh, Barbara said 'makwa,' that means bear." Their mind is going this way. That means bear, makwak is two or more bears. And my story is going along and I've gone another five minutes while the student is thinking about that one word and he's missed out all this here. So, I tell the students not to listen for words. Listen for the meaning. Listen to what do I mean when I am doing this, saying this or what. I draw pictures. I utilize any visual way that I can to help the student get the gist of what I am saying... I think we've been trying to go backwards. We've been trying to make the students speak before they've even understood. The thing is the language must be heard. The language must be listened to. Then the language will be understood and then the language will be spoken.¹⁸²

Alan Corbiere accepted that immersion programs are seen as the remedy for reversing language shift. "Everyone always wants to have an immersion program because it's the fastest proven thing to get people speaking, especially young people, young children." However, he urged caution that immersion programs often fall short of expectations because they are under-resourced, improperly implemented, or both.

You have these immersion programs where they, and this is documented and not just in Ojibwe country, other places are experiencing this, they say they have an immersion program, but they actually don't, as they end up teaching in English, translating for the kid what they've said. But that's for children. If you were to get the parents of those children involved as well, you'd have to give them a theoretical background in English because young parents already have English as a first language and you're teaching them Ojibwe as a second language so you have to teach them the methodology. The Zhaagnaashwak already have a lot of methodology developed for that and those aren't, for whatever different reasons, either resources or time, or whatever else, aren't applied to their full effect. So you get a half-applied method and we get half the results. But in an immersion school setting, you could have those children all speaking. It's easier with children, that's why they keep emphasizing that, but what ends up happening is the teacher is, and it usually just falls on the one teacher

¹⁸² Nolan, interview.

sadly enough and that's why it doesn't work sometimes because the teacher gets burnt out. It's hard to keep speaking in Ojibwe and to implement the provincial curriculum that's written in English. And they have to translate that all into Ojibwe and deliver it into Ojibwe when in some cases there are no words for network or Internet. Some people have devised words, but those words haven't been accepted generally outside everywhere.¹⁸³

Corbiere advised against a premature commitment to immersion models of language teaching that treat them as a panacea for language erosion. Although the consensus seems to be that immersion is most effective, there remained concerns about how effectively that model is being applied.

Be Mindful of Language's Connection to Identity

Alan Corbiere described how Anishinaabeg who learn Anishinaabemowin as a second language often struggle, and many other research participants noted a tendency for Anishinaabe students to lag behind non-natives in picking up the language. There are many possible explanations for this phenomenon, but there is clearly a need for ASL learners to feel comfortable and secure as they begin to recover their ancestral language. Many instructors have come up with innovative ways to avoid singling out and potentially embarrassing their students.

So what I used to do when I was an assistant teacher after a while, teaching language was have a choral reading, so that the class was reading together and you can't distinguish who was making the mistake. So at first the teacher would read, and then they would read the next sentence, but you'd have to be able to correct yourself though. And you have to hear the word properly otherwise you end up saying it incorrectly and you just perpetuate it. So what the choral reading is – you are running it through your mind and out your mouth and you're able to hopefully emulate that and incorporate that into your self, your being. I don't know, it worked for some people, you just have to try all kinds of different things to teach. That's all. It's a lot of hard work.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Corbiere, interview.

¹⁸⁴ Corbiere, interview.

Another positive way to connect language to identity is to explore Anishinaabe names and place-names.¹⁸⁵ This is an important part of Basil Johnston's work as his audio introductory course translates Anishinaabe names and place names to assist students in learning those words and phrases. Ningewance Nadeau's books also have dedicated sections for place-names with literal translations. Alan Corbiere described how names are a way of connecting ASL students to their clans, communities, families and history by studying their meaning and origins in the language.

What I always wanted to do was make an Ojibwe language course that teaches not just the differences in vocabulary and conversational Ojibwe, but teaches the stories and the concepts that go with it... rather than learning the grammar rules and learning vocabulary and that. So one of the things I wanted to do was a section on legends and a section on Anishinaabe names and what do those names mean... I asked Johnny Debassige what the name meant and he says, "Mii waa-pii-nimkiikaa when it's lightning out and there's a big storm and there's repeated flashes of lightning," and he says, "Gaye-tesnoo-shadow, there's no shadow." If you look at that word and if somebody's coming here in the night and their lights are flashing, you'd say biidaasige, and then when the sun shines through the clouds they say zhiibaasige, and that's the same word they

¹⁸⁵ Keith Basso wrote a highly original ethnographic account of place-names and their importance to the Western Apache in *Wisdom Sits In Places - Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1996). Reading this book for the first time is overwhelming because the reader is presented with a non-western concept of time and space which is beautifully written by an outsider. Basso learned the language and was involved in a place names project in their traditional territory. He describes the early admonishment by a tribal Elder who was frustrated by Basso's inability to correctly pronounce the place names. The Elder explained "that whenever one uses a place-name, even unthinkingly, one is quoting ancestral speech – and that is not only good but something to take seriously." (30) In their own words, the tribal members describe how the land "speaks" to them through the place names and the stories that these names represent (38). Fewer Apache are now "currently embarking on the ancestral trail of wisdom. Caught up with other concerns and reluctant to appear old-fashioned before their watchful peers, they travel less extensively, learn smaller bodies of cautionary narratives, and subscribe with mounting conviction to the imported belief that useful knowledge comes mainly from formal schooling." (147) The stories themselves are losing their influence as the younger generations do not learn them nor their ancestral language (158).

use for x-rays, zhiibaasjigan... the light goes through it. And so when you are full, you say ndebsinii and if you say you have enough of something, you say debshkinii or debse so that de- means enough, or full. So when you say Debassige, that's what it means, filled with light, that's why he said there's no shadow, Debassige, filled with light... That's why I think our names are so important; they're more than just names. Sure we have, Makwa and Ojiig and these kinds of names, but there's actual names there that have a different meaning. And those are the names that are attached to an actual legend and have teachings that go with it. One of the other names that people have here, they're called Able in English, but their name is Zhaawonigwanebi. That name to me, zhaawong is the south and then nbi is that feather again. As he's sitting. So he's sitting with feathers to the south. Then you think of it, well is that a bird, or is that a chief and he's sitting with his feathers to the south? And if that's the case, then so what, what does that mean? It has bigger meaning than what we are left with now. So that's what our job is as language learners, people who are trying to wrestle with this self-determination, self-government and self-concept.¹⁸⁶

Basil Johnston takes a similar approach in his language teaching. The beginning lesson in his course includes a list of place-names and family names with translations and short histories about their origins. Johnston also connected language learning to identity and described meeting Anishinaabe youth at a language conference who explained that their interest in learning Anishinaabemowin is existential.

They're looking for an identity. I think it was around 2003, I was down in Kettle Point, there was a weekend, kind of an immersion conference. And I sat down with four young high school girls; one of them was maybe grade 12. I asked them, "Why did you take the Native Studies course, you know, the Indian Studies language?" And the older girl said, "I wanted to learn who I was." Then I asked her, "And did you find out who you were?" And she said, "No." Because all she learned was grammar and some linguistics. And I think, all the way through life this is what we ask ourselves, "Who am I? Am I what I would like to be? Am I what I think I would like to be? Or am I what I should be? If I fall short then how can I be what I ought to be?"¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Corbiere, interview.

¹⁸⁷ Johnston, interview.

In the previous chapter, many research participants explained their interest in ASL work as an opportunity to help others develop a strong Anishinaabe identity. Part of this process is learning not only language, but cultural teachings as well. Basil writes that as children learn to speak, “they begin to listen to stories, and they begin to learn something of their heritage and culture. And as children and youth learn their tribe’s traditions and customs and understandings, they also learn more about their own language.”¹⁸⁸ Learning culture and language are mutually reinforcing processes that will be explored in the following section.

Ensure ASL Teaching Is Culturally Appropriate

Nelson Toulouse described culture and language as inextricable and interdependent.

*Culture is important, but I think what people fail to realize is that language is culture. You simply can't take ceremonies and not incorporate language so I think it's a matter of doing the work of convincing people that in fact culture and language is the same. You know you can't separate them so the understanding has to be in the language and that's what's really important.*¹⁸⁹

ASL research participants frequently emphasized how their involvement in other

¹⁸⁸ Basil Johnston, "How do we learn language? What do we learn?," in *Talking On The Page - Editing Aboriginal Texts*, 43-51 (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 45.

¹⁸⁹ Nelson Toulouse, interview. Toulouse’s view that culture and language are best transmitted together is supported by many scholars. Mary Hermes wrote a dissertation on cultural and linguistic education at an Ojibwe reservation in the US. She advised packaging both culture and language in immersion school curricula. “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.” Mary Hermes, “Ma’lingan is just a Misspelling of the Word Wolf: A Case Study for Teaching Culture Through Language,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2005), 52.

Anishinaabe cultural activities inspired them to develop their language skills.

Bebamash believes that cultural protocols such as offering tobacco also support his language learning. “And also your traditional ways, maintain those in the city because they really help too. Developing your prayers in Ojibwe, learning how to use tobacco properly...and ask for help that you want to speak your language and it will go a long way.”¹⁹⁰ Bebamash explained that drumming and working with Elders have taught him a great deal and helped him learn the language.

*I drum as well. I drum with some good friends there, traditional Anishinaabe drumming. And we learn a lot through that also with an Elder and learn a lot about the language and culture and how they go together and how to help one another.*¹⁹¹

Alan Corbiere recommended restoring the traditional role of Elders as primary caregivers and teachers in Anishinaabe society.

*School isn't the only answer. That's why you'd have to have a generational aspect to your teaching. That's what they always point out about the residential schools. But it wasn't just the residential schools it was the day schools as well whereas, in the traditional times, it was the Elders that taught the children. But now the Elders aren't actually part of our education to the children. If we're lucky, at university we get to hear an Elder come in and do a presentation once in a while. Or we get to have an Elder as a counselor in a student-counseling situation. But they're not there to teach per se. And that's really what I think is missing is that intergenerational transmission of the language, the intergenerational transmission of the knowledge and it's because the Elders have been removed or relieved of their role as the teachers. They have these diagrams, like concentric circles and in the center is the children. In the circle immediately around that is the grandparents and then the parents outside of that and then the aunties and uncles. It talks about the roles and responsibilities and the primary caregivers. So if we were able to reinstitute that then... actually pour money into having Elders there as well. We'd have to train them how to teach and how to speak always in Ojibwe.*¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Bebamash, interview.

¹⁹¹ Bebamash, interview.

¹⁹² Corbiere, interview.

Alan Corbiere first became involved in Anishinaabe cultural activities while assisting with and attending Elders' gatherings in southern Ontario. In the 1990s he noticed more attention was being paid specifically to Indigenous languages as opposed to more general themes of Indigenous knowledge or Elders' knowledge.¹⁹³ This connection between culture and language has been growing in prominence and many Anishinaabeg consider the two to be inseparable.

Lorena Fontaine shared her vision of Anishinaabe education that includes both culture and language.

What I have been told by Ojibwe speakers that have the same vision of schools is that they, well a few of them anyways, have said that in order to teach the language you need to teach them about cultural objects as well. Like shakers and things that we used in our ceremonies so that you are not only teaching them a language, but teaching about their identity as well. Whether that would fit in the parameters of our education system, I don't know, because I don't know enough about creating a school and the provincial curriculum guidelines that are required. I hope that Aboriginal language immersion schools will be accredited, but the schools will teach the language in a culturally appropriate way.¹⁹⁴

Fontaine singled out summer language camps as an ideal example.

The 3 Fires [Midewewin Lodge] that I belong to they have language camps. The kids who go to the camps live in the city, but they also have the camps around Lake of the Woods. They do it every summer. They teach them how to speak language, but they also teach them about ceremonies.¹⁹⁵

Liz Osawamick integrates ceremonies into her language teaching in

Peterborough, Ontario. She invites Elders into her classroom and leads cultural activities while teaching ASL to her students.

That's another thing that I do when I'm teaching. I put the culture in there as well because they go hand in hand. We do the smudging in the school

¹⁹³ Corbiere, interview.

¹⁹⁴ Fontaine, interview.

¹⁹⁵ Fontaine, interview.

at least once a week to start us off. That helps them as well to retain the language and it helps them. And having to do the Native crafts I get them to do that as well. Then they learn all the words that go with that. We hold the pow-wow every year too. All of last year, we had a talent show as well. An Ojibwe talent show and they got to sing and perform in front of the community, in front of their parents.¹⁹⁶

One of the priorities of AR efforts has been to document ceremonial and other domains of language that are more rarely used because they are the most likely to be forgotten. Darrel Boissoneau described how Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig seeks to integrate ceremonial Anishinaabemowin into its programming.

If there was a priority we'd want to do the old language. I think there's a sense, particularly amongst our older population, our Elders, that we need to save that part of our language to ensure that it's still spoken. Where we see it spoken quite frequently, in our experience anyway, is in the Mide lodge. The old language is still spoken. I imagine it's spoken elsewhere, but in the large form, that's where we see it spoken. So, that would be a priority. I think we need to save the language, because there are words and terminology that are forgotten in the new language. We need to ensure that there is a transition to preserve that.¹⁹⁷

Disagreements arise around efforts to teach reading and writing in Anishinaabemowin. These disagreements can become quite controversial when ceremonial terms or sacred stories are being recorded in written form. Many teachers spoke of how they have been criticized for doing so.

And of course you know there are people out there that say, "You shouldn't be writing it. That's not the way to teach it." There's people out there who will say that. I get a lot of criticism because I teach it this way. Some people say, "You should just be talking to them." I usually say that to students when they first come in. "If I just start speaking to you in the language how many of you would get up or after class go down and sign out?" About half of them would put their hand up because they want to understand at least a little bit of what you're trying to tell them. And students, they've been programmed to look at a paper, you know, since grade one, they put a book in front of you. They've been programmed to look at some paper; at least it looks like they are learning something when

¹⁹⁶ Osawamick, interview.

¹⁹⁷ Boissoneau, interview.

they look at paper. So there's that idea. I figure it's a good way to learn the language when somebody just speaks it to you, just talks to you, it's a quicker way to learn the language if somebody is really interested in it, really works at it and listens, pays attention, and tries to pick up on it. Whereas this way trying to learn from paper, it's really difficult because I can't really write how to say things on paper. Like sometimes, intonation, you know, using intonation for questions. You can't put that on a paper. I guess you could put in brackets, "intonation." Like instead of asking a "na" question, "Gi-giiwiisin na?" you might say "Gi-giiwiisin?" "Slight intonation." Those kinds of things you can't impart on paper. Whereas in voice you hear somebody say it and you can pick up on it. So those kinds of things, there are drawbacks to both situations really.¹⁹⁸

Despite these tensions around whether Anishinaabemowin literacy is culturally appropriate, the tide has turned decidedly in favour of those who support teaching Anishinaabemowin literacy. Almost all research participants employ reading and writing in some aspect of their AR work. The following section discusses how language literacy supports AR.

Integrate Reading & Writing in ASL

Most participants believe that reading and writing the language is now necessary. Bebamash is a former and future ASL teacher who developed his own proficiency by reading in the language. Reading was one way that he could continue learning away from his reserve on Manitoulin Island while attending college in Kitchener, Ontario.

But my experience from doing it on my own in the city is to get those resources and, if you don't know how to read the Fiero writing system, it's easy to learn... A lot of people get discouraged by wanting to pick up a book to learn their language...I learned a lot from books and I can use the words and converse with an Elder with those words that I learned out of a book.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Webkamigad, interview.

¹⁹⁹ Bebamash, interview.

Bebamash recommended this learning method to others who are isolated from language-learning opportunities.

I recognize that we do have to use reading and writing these days, not that we have to, but it's necessary. I find it necessary because of the time that we're spending together. In the traditional times, we were around it 24/7, culture and language. But these days the way we're living separately and we're not living among each other so closely, well for now anyway. So right now these foreign ways are proving useful to us to get back to where we need to be. It's almost, sometimes I see it as these foreign ways have depleted us, but right now we can use these foreign ways to regenerate ourselves.²⁰⁰

Melvin Peltier explained that the Sault College immersion certificate program recognizes that students have been raised in a literate society and now expect literacy in Anishinaabemowin.

Although it wasn't a written language a lot of people now are looking at wanting to learn how to write it as well... We want to get more of that writing component into it because it makes it easier for some... [because] they like to read and hear at the same time.²⁰¹

He stated that the AIC's goal is to develop both oral and written Anishinaabemowin proficiency.

Ningewance Nadeau imagined going beyond ASL materials to the creation of literature in Anishinaabemowin.

I would like to see people writing in the language, writing short stories, writing novels. I was fortunate this past summer to teach in the NLIP Program at Lakehead University and one of the courses I taught was creative writing for fluent people. I had 16 students in that class and they wrote whatever assignments I gave them. One of them was to write about a 12 year old girl and her adventures so they handed in all of these wonderful stories about this 12-year-old girl. Another was to write a love story in the language. Actually I was really surprised – the two best stories were by men. I thought it would be women cranking out these Harlequin Romances. I really like the ones written by the men. One was very tragic almost like Romeo and Juliet. The other one was very graphic.

²⁰⁰ Bebamash, interview.

²⁰¹ Peltier, interview.

*It takes place, it is an illicit love affair by these two people who meet away from their communities and it was very realistic. I was totally thrilled by all of their efforts.*²⁰²

The issue of Anishinaabemowin literacy is less contentious than when such skills must be developed. Barb Nolan believed that there is too much emphasis on developing reading and writing skills when the focus should be on developing oral comprehension first and then assisting learners to produce speech. Mary Young also expressed concern with this perceived imbalance in ASL instruction.

*I think the fact that universities, Brandon, U of M[anitoba], and here at the U of W[innipeg], the fact that they offer those classes is significant, but I think there is a certain way that language should be taught. This is my own bias. I don't think there is enough conversation in those classes because it's an oral language and we can't forget about that. I used to actually tutor the students from the classes and I don't know anything about linguistics. It was being taught as a written language, but it's not a written language. I had trouble with that part of the tutoring. But we still had fun. We made sure that the conversations continued.*²⁰³

Basil Johnston offered an identical criticism of the tendency to focus on reading and writing in the language.

What I object to most is courses that require beginners to learn to read, write, spell, listen, talk all at the same time, it doesn't work that way... You know, it takes a baby about two years to say its first word. And that first word may not resemble the actual pronunciation of the word. That's roughly two to two-and-a-half years or anywhere between four and 6000 hours, of listening. And the teachers have never gone to teacher's college. They just talk and they talk normally. You don't require their kids to write or spell or do exercises. And it takes another two years before those kids start talking in sentences. And they're not taught to print until they're about seven years old. And here Native Studies courses require that you learn to read, write and spell all at the same bloody time. And picking up Spanish, I just listen - I don't write anything. I don't want to write anything. I want to be able to follow conversation and be able to take part in it. Period. I think, you know, it's part of the Ministry of

²⁰² Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²⁰³ Young, interview.

*Education's fault for requiring the written exercises. And they teach dumb things. Their courses, a lot of them are pure pap.*²⁰⁴

Johnston emphasized that to be effective ASL must be “fun, not a burden.” The following section looks at how ASL teachers are creating these necessary conditions for AR.

Make ASL Engaging and Social

One inspiring example comes from the engaging work being done by Maya Chacaby and the Ciimaan language group to develop language activities at the University of Toronto. The first venture was a theatre project that was done in Anishinaabemowin.

I started working on this theatre project where we took the language and we made it active. A lot of the students are in Aboriginal Studies so the first theatre production we did was a Nanabush story about the history of colonization and it was all in Ojibwe. That was two years ago and we were able to perform it in the community. And the change that came over the students was quite dramatic. After that, they really started engaging with one another, got out of their shells, tried out these new words, were using whole phrases and would affectionately call one another the theatre names that they had so Nanabush is still Nanabush, he will always be Nanabush. They took a kind of responsibility for the language that was different than simply reading through a book, then closing it and going home. They took it as part of their personality now. You know, Nanabush the theatre character has in his personality now, some of that role.

*I think that was an important step for us and I don't think that I would have been able to do the socials if I hadn't done the theatre project to begin with so we run them through the Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives at U of T. We run them together so a lot of the people who come to the socials then get involved in the theatre project, or a lot of the people who get out of their shell in the theatre project then go to the socials. So that's what we have been working on and I know it seems or sounds simple, the socials and the theatre project, but they are huge undertakings when you don't have resources. So that's taken up about two years of my time.*²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Johnston, interview.

²⁰⁵ Chacaby, interview.

Chacaby and others at the Centre have developed a range of activities: games, karaoke, and the runaway success of Ojibwe Speed-Dating.

Everyone has a little booklet and you choose where you want to go with the conversation. If you want pick-up lines, they're in there. If you just want to talk about the weather, it's in there. If you want to talk about what your favourite colour is or what music you listen to, the question is there and the answer is there. You have five minutes and then you have to go to the next table and visit... With the socials and particularly the speed-dating one, we had people who had not ever said a word in Ojibwe. We had Anishinaabe-kwe who were so ashamed of the language that had never been able to say a word. They go to class and don't speak at all. For over an hour and a half, everyone, the people who never spoke, who were too scared to speak it, or who only knew a few words, every single person was speaking only Anishinaabemowin and they didn't even realize it because they were having so much fun. And you know we put so many humorous – like we tried to translate funny pick-up lines, like “Did you just walk in or is the sun shining?” or “If you were a library book I would like to check you out.” You know, as many as we could. Just funny, funny phrases.²⁰⁶

Liz Osawamick, who learned American Sign Language to raise her youngest son who was born with severe hearing loss, developed another creative approach to ASL teaching.

My eight year old has severe hearing loss, because he was premature, and so I have to learn another language. That's sign language, ASL. But that's also helped me with the language because now I'm learning American Sign Language and with that sign language, I'm using it as well to teach the language. Just like “Aanii,” “Boozhoo,” “Miigwech” “Thank you.” Little words like that: “Minikwe,” “Drink” “Wiisinin,” “Eat.” So it's really helped me. And also Anishinaabemowin Teg where I sit on the board, we have the conference every year at the end of March, and so I offer a workshop and mine was Ojibwe sign language. I called it “OSL.” I was teaching those basic signs I use with my son to teach the language. That was a hit that year. So I'm hoping to keep offering that and when I teach the children, that's what I teach them. That way it's easier for them to learn the language by using those signs, even with songs.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Chacaby, interview.

²⁰⁷ Osawamick, interview.

Osawamick's OSL is an example of a creative immersion teaching method because the signs adopted from American Sign Language can easily be taught to her students. This method is similar to Total Physical Response (TPR), which connects language learning with physical action. It is especially effective for teaching simple "action" imperative verbs in command form. For example, learners hear and respond to the command from their instructor to "sit" or "stand" in the target language. TPR became a popular method for immersion teaching with beginners in the 1970s.

TPR begins with a 'silent period' in which learners respond physically to simple requests by the teacher, who uses gestures to help communicate to the students what the teacher wants them to do. The acting out of the new requested behaviours help students remember the meaning of the phrases they are hearing. Although students initially respond silently to the teacher's requests, after just a few lessons, they are soon asking other students to perform actions, including recombining vocabulary that the teacher has been using and making requests that they have never heard before. In TPR, students are first asked to 'stand up,' 'walk,' and 'jump,' and in advanced TPR, students act out skits.²⁰⁸

Another effective way to engage learners is to bring other fluent speakers into the classroom. This creates a more language-rich environment for learners because the teacher has someone else to help model Anishinaabemowin conversation. In her ASL teaching, Osawamick invites other local speakers into her classroom as teaching resources for her students.

It's important that we get those speakers to come out. I have my friend here, Vera Bell, that helped me. She's one of the speakers that I converse with. So she comes to my language classes here and we converse in the language. So it's easier for the people to hear us speak the language. If there's only one speaker, it's hard, but usually if there are two, you can converse with one another.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Reyhner, *Contemporary Native American*, 90-91.

²⁰⁹ Osawamick, interview.

Just as the outside world can be brought into the classroom, so too can the classroom be taken outside. Another popular method to activate language learning is to move outdoors. This popular technique warrants its own category and will be described in the following section.

Take ASL Outside the Classroom

Many teachers feel that language learning is more effective outside the classroom. Mary Young works at the University of Winnipeg, but felt that a land-based learning environment is more appropriate for Anishinaabemowin.

I think it's good that universities offer language courses, but we need to get out of the buildings. We need to go out into the land whether that's in the park over there or whether it's by a river or in the bush. That's where our language is from. That's how we're connected to the land. When I go, I bet you, when I go this weekend to Red Willow, I know there is going to be a spiritual significance to my being there because I am out in the bush, I am there with my brothers and sisters, I am there with Anishinaabe people, I am there with the teachings. I think we are limited if we just stay in the classroom... I can think of more creative ways of doing it in the city. I just know that we need to take students out or the learners out of the building. The conversation you have around a fire is so much different with the kind of conversations that you have in the classroom. It's such a huge difference - the energy is different.²¹⁰

Basil Johnston felt so strongly on this point that he emphatically denied the possibility that Anishinaabemowin can be taught effectively in the city.

What they need is to be taken out to the land. You can't teach anything about the land in a concrete jungle or concrete canyons with all the noise, with all the foul smells of a city, with maybe a few trees in a park that are all grown in rows where you have no animals to act out life for you to see. In a city everything is drowned out. But you can take out young people and just to learn about themselves, just take them out into the country, to an Indian Reserve where there are no televisions, iPods, you know all these gadgets.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Young, interview.

²¹¹ Johnston, interview.

Johnston explained that the Anishinaabemowin verb “to teach,” “Aki-noomaage” includes the root “aki,” which is the term for land or territory.

This is how our ancestors learned things and how they taught things. You didn't go into a classroom and read books. You went out in the field and you saw, what you call specimens in museums, in real life doing real things and where these creatures live and the relationships they had with one another, and with plants and with birds and with animals and with the weather. So they call that I think today holistic learning, holistic teaching. But you've got to get out there. We have a word in our language, “Aki-noomaage,” the earth teaching and this is what I think Red Jacket pointed out to the missionaries in 1805 who attempted to get the Six Nations to renounce the long house religion and adopt civilization. Red Jacket said to them, one of the things he said was, “To you He has given the book, to us He's given the mountains and the rivers and the valleys, has given us the land.” I don't know if it was him or somebody else who said, I think it was a Dakota, “If all the books were eaten up by moths then you have nothing to read, you still have the land.” And you'd have to start learning all over again.

There are a lot of things to teach and re-teach our people. In the stories, one of the values that comes out, one of the very first lessons for kids was to espouse selflessness, to share. Based on the assumption that we are all born with a consciousness of self, you know, me, me, me and that's the source of all ill will, ill deeds. If you can diminish that and replace it by selflessness and sharing and in order to do that you have to instill the principle, walk in balance or live in harmony. We didn't need West Europeans, or missionaries to come along and tell us that. We knew that already. It was there. So I think the kind of life that our ancestors led demanded that they get to know themselves and it's the land that tells you that. And that brings out the best in you.²¹²

Johnston assists Sagamok First Nation in developing a stories-based curricula in Anishinaabemowin for that community's immersion elementary school. He explained that the intent is for children to receive one story per month so that they graduate with approximately eighty stories. “So by the time the youngsters are finished elementary school, they'll have a fairly good understanding of the

²¹² Johnston, interview.

way in which we think, and how we perceive things and how we interpret things.²¹³

Howard Webkamigad taught at Central Michigan University from 1985-1990 and arranged summer home-placements for several of his students at his home reserve in Wikwemikong. The students stayed with local families for six weeks and then the class reconvened for three hours each day to discuss their progress. Although the intention was for students to be immersed, he found that families were reluctant to speak Anishinaabemowin and instead used English.²¹⁴ Osawamick is from the same reserve and she brings her elementary students from Peterborough to Wikwemikong as well.

With my [grade] seven and eights, I have about 10 of them, for the last couple of years, I have taken them on a trip to Manitoulin Island. Both times they were a huge success and they really appreciated it. It's something that they'll remember forever. I've taken them to my sister and brother-in-law's camp. We take our tents and we stay out by the lake. It's only three days. From there, we go and visit the schools over there: public school, junior school and the high school. We take a tour and visit the other Ojibwe language programs there.²¹⁵

Many others have attempted this model of community-based language immersion. A more recent and, by all accounts, successful attempt is that of Dennis Jones who has taught Ojibwe at the University of Minnesota (Twin Cities) since the mid-1990s. Jones is from Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation near Lake of the Woods, Ontario. He and his family founded the Ottertail Immersion camp that hosts ASL learners at various times throughout the year for land-based immersion activities, including fishing, wild rice harvesting, and medicine

²¹³ Johnston, interview.

²¹⁴ Webkamigad, interview.

²¹⁵ Osawamick, interview.

gathering.²¹⁶ Such language camps are one example of AR spaces that are being established. The following section looks at the range of institutions, programs, and resources that Anishinaabeg are developing to teach Anishinaabemowin.

Develop AR Institutions, Programs and Resources

The previous section described participants' views on the importance of creating an ideal learning environment for Anishinaabemowin. Participants frequently identified the lack of "spaces" to conduct AR work as a major impediment. Many believed that culture or language clubs similar to those organized by immigrant communities could help maintain and revitalize Anishinaabemowin in urban areas. Indian and Métis Friendship Centres once served a similar role even when they were open to all Indigenous people regardless of their language affiliation. The Native Canadian Centre (NCC) in Toronto drew Cree, Mohawk, Ojibwe, and many other Indigenous people, but was able to offer language-specific activities. Fred Wheatley taught Ojibwe at the NCC and recalled in an interview how youth and young parents would gather there and enjoyed "socializing" in Ojibwe.²¹⁷ Finding space for AR activities is a constant challenge and this section looks at various ways that Anishinaabeg are creating intellectual and physical places of refuge for Anishinaabemowin.

²¹⁶ Dennis Jones, "Ojibwe Language Camp," (presentation at the Connecting Language, Communities and Classrooms Native Language Conference, Fort Frances, Ontario, April 8, 2009).

²¹⁷ Roger Obansawin and Heather Howard-Bobiwash, "The Native Canadian Centre of Toronto: The Meeting Place for the Aboriginal Community for 35 Years," in *The Meeting Place - Aboriginal Life in Toronto*, 25-59 (Toronto, ON: Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, 1997), 35.

Many Anishinaabeg are assessing what is working and what can be improved in AR.

We've done our studies as well. Our local First Nations, as maybe other First Nations who have language programs in their primary schools, are recognizing that at the end of the day, we're not producing any fluent speakers. We don't want to level that as a criticism because a lot of good people are doing a lot of good work, but somewhere it is falling short. For it to have existed for such a long time, we should have been making those improvements to ensure that we're producing speakers at the end of the day. Once they leave elementary, they go on to high school and they don't learn the language. Once they leave high school they can't have it at post-secondary as well. Even when they graduate from post-secondary, they're still not fluent speakers. There needs to be a shift in that. What is it that's going to improve it? We believe that the idea of Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig and how we want to do immersion programs and how we want to do traditional language and how we want to do modern language and how we want to do pilot projects is going to do that. We're going to ensure that at the end of the day, when you graduate with a degree from Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig after four years, a prerequisite is that you're going to be fluent as well. It's an ambitious dream, but it's a dream that can be achieved as well.²¹⁸

Fortunately, an infrastructure to support AR is beginning to take shape. The following section explores that infrastructure and assesses what more could be done to support ASL.

Develop ASL Institutions and Programs

One common concern is the lack of physical space in which to conduct AR work. Even elementary schools rarely provide language teachers with their own classrooms but instead require them to move from room to room. This makes it more difficult to provide a language-rich environment with games, posters, and other visual stimuli to support ASL learning. Isadore Toulouse called upon educational institutions to provide more support for their ASL instructors.

²¹⁸ Boissoneau, interview.

I think we need to see a bigger, active role from our First Nations' schools into bringing the language back into the schools. Having our teachers have their own classrooms in the First Nations' schools instead of having the teacher go from room to room teaching his or her language, having his or her books in a cart because the room should be filled with Ojibwe language material, stuff, books, resources, so the kids can see, "Hey my language is important."²¹⁹

Toulouse is the current board president for the annual language revitalization conference called Anishinaabemowin Teg. The conference is an important event for language teachers and people attend from all over Anishinaabe-aki. Shirley Williams is also a board member and she explained its original purpose to support revitalization work.

We have come together and we started an organization called Anishinaabemowin Teg where we put conferences on. The goal was really to restore pride, to make awareness and bring people to become aware of language issues right across Canada or here in Ontario, mostly, for our people. We have many different tribes here: Cree, Oji-Cree, Delaware, Iroquois people, Potawatomis, Odawas and Ojibwes. We're all in the same boat. Specifically we're moving towards reviving that language. That was our work. What we decided was to have conferences and just to bring people together and share our stories, revive it and take pride in it. I think we have done that successfully, because we have invited people that have skills in putting on plays in Anishinaabemowin and we have songs by guitar and translating language. We've had ladies that sang Country & Western songs like "Your Cheating Heart" and that's hilarious when you sing it in the language with a guitar. I think people really enjoy it when somebody has the skill of how to sing in a group. It's restoring language for the people."²²⁰

Anishinaabemowin Teg has played an important role in raising the language's status among Anishinaabeg and this increased interest has fueled the growth of academic programs for the specific purpose of revitalizing Anishinaabemowin. Sault College has a unique one-year Anishinaabemowin Immersion Certificate (AIC) program for ASL adult learners. It is the only

²¹⁹ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

²²⁰ Williams, interview.

program of its kind in Canada and since 2007 is also offered off-campus on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. The AIC runs on a normal workday schedule, but accommodates parents' schedules should their children need to be taken to or picked up at school. The AIC is accessible to many local reserves as well as the local urban-based Anishinaabe community in Sault Ste. Marie with the off-campus program at Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (KTEI) serving a similar function for Manitoulin Island.

The primary disadvantage of its affiliation with Sault College relates to the need to charge tuition and collect fees from students. "Unfortunately a lot of our students can't afford some of the tuition and many of the funding agencies that do fund First Nations students... don't normally fund one-year certificate programs."²²¹ Peltier blames government funding-formulas that prevent these agencies from supporting students to take the AIC program and explained that for Sault College, "It's still a business here." Peltier hoped that eventually, if more funds become available, the AIC could be expanded to a diploma (2 years) with more emphasis on both oral and written proficiency. "We could expand it more because to learn the language in one year is not enough." He also believed that an expanded diploma should segue into a university B.Ed. because teachers need accreditation in Anishinaabemowin. Peltier recommended that Anishinaabeg build on existing programs such as the AIC and expand them.

Many participants shared concerns that schools and universities are not doing enough to support AR. Ningewance Nadeau and Howard Webkamigad have both been teaching Anishinaabemowin at the post-secondary level since

²²¹ Peltier, interview.

the 1970s and they share similar disappointments that these institutions are failing to produce proficient speakers. Ningewance Nadeau lamented that Manitoba universities are not doing anything past introduction and intermediate instruction in Indigenous languages. She believes that at least four levels of language instruction should be offered so that students have language courses available to them in each undergraduate year.²²² Many participants were concerned that existing educational institutions at all levels are not up to the task of AR. Alan Corbiere believed that it would be necessary to create a special Anishinaabemowin academy with students and teachers who are dedicated to carrying their cultural and linguistic heritage.

This would be divisive, but I often thought that where the Anishinaabeg are right now, and education, people always say, "Everyone's got a right to education." But now what I'm thinking is we're at a point where we have to pull out the best, the ones that actually want to learn and are going to learn. What I would do is take those ones out and make an academy and they would be in there to actually learn to speak Ojibwe, not just learn to speak Ojibwe, but learn... the whole thing about Anishinaabe bmaadziwin, Anishinaabe zhitwaawin. We would have the whole thing centered around that: learning the ceremonies, learning the stories, learning our history, all in our language, learning geography, learning crafts and arts in our language.

I often thought that if we had a special academy or institute set up for that the parents have to decide that their kids can get in there. It would make it exclusive. The sad thing is that a lot of our people and a lot of the students, they have fetal alcohol syndrome or these other problems at home that I find would be disruptive in the class. I think that at one point, you look at California, where you only have ten speakers left of the language. I just hope we don't get to that point and then there's other points where people are learning from tapes because their last speaker just died. So if we were really making a concerted effort, you basically pull all your best together and send them forward, that's how I would do it. Right now as it stands, like when I went to school, remarkably we're still at the same spot. There, up at Lakeview, any of these First Nations schools,

²²² Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

*they're still learning the language one hour, maybe half an hour a day. You're not getting enough language.*²²³

Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig is positioning itself as the leader in Anishinaabe post-secondary education. Darrell Boissoneau is the president and described how Shingwauk can take a leading role in AR.

*Actually the Anishinaabemowin program is something that is new and old at the same time. New in the sense that this is the first year transferred over to Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig. For the last 14 years, it's been taught by Algoma University College, now Algoma University, where Howard Webkamigad has been professor. He's been teaching that as an accredited course throughout Algoma. This year, we negotiated with Algoma University through a covenant we entered in to bring the Anishinaabemowin over to Shingwauk. Again, I think that it fits in well to our plans for Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig because all the terms and everything that we're encouraging to be done in recognizing and respecting Shingwauk will be done in Anishinaabemowin.*²²⁴

Boissoneau described the current course offerings and proposals for expanding them.

The Anishinaabemowin program currently has its curriculum that has been set up so that's what we are implementing for this year. We have three classes: 1st year, 2nd year and 3rd year. As a result of what we're able to bring to the table, we've been able to boost the enrolment for Anishinaabemowin in 1st and 2nd year. In 3rd year, we've seen this as well, but we don't have the actual numbers that are required. We're still doing it because we're doing it as a reading class. We look at the current course we offer as more of the modern day language has been expressed. We want to teach that to those who are interested. Another part of what we want to do as well is there is the traditional language, the old language that is spoken and we're in some very preliminary talks right now with a number of groups as to how we could design this particular course. That's what Gite-Anishinaabemowin, that's what we want to put forward. It's very much in the early stages and we need to look at some of the structural changes that we need to do, but we did a lot of inquiries with fluent speakers already and asked them what is it that Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig can offer me? We thought about it for a little bit in terms of continuing education and teaching the old language and this would relate

²²³ Corbiere, interview.

²²⁴ Boissoneau, interview.

*back and reflect on what is being spoken where we conduct our ceremonial activities.*²²⁵

Just as institutions and programs are being established a similar process is underway to supply them with the necessary resources that teachers can use in the classroom or that learners can use on their own for independent study. The next section looks at the range of existing resources or those currently under development.

Develop ASL Learning Resources

All participants stressed the challenges posed by insufficient funding, lack of facilities and the lack of trained ASL teachers and support staff.

*The first thing that is glaring is the disadvantages because we don't have the funding generally to sustain language programs. Teachers face quite a few barriers because there is not enough curriculum so they have to create curriculum. And more training programs are required so people can learn how to teach the language. You need resources in order to do all of that. I don't think that there is enough right now. I think that there needs to be guaranteed funding every year that we can count on to do that work because it is quite expensive. I guess the positive things are that people are engaging in this work with limited funding. There is a lot of dedication that I see in language revitalization. It is really inspiring to hear about people so dedicated to revitalizing the language that will do it with very little resources. That shouldn't happen, but it demonstrates the dedication is there.*²²⁶

Despite funding challenges, many dedicated and talented Anishinaabeg continue to produce their own ASL resources. Osawamick teaches ASL through four part-time jobs and still finds time to develop resource materials including an audio CD of Anishinaabemowin songs.

We don't have a lot of resources so I'm working on little projects. I have a CD that I'm working on. I made it for my daughter and I'm hoping to get it

²²⁵ Boissoneau, interview.

²²⁶ Fontaine, interview.

out. It's songs that are geared to children to help her as she's learning the language. Learning through songs, I find that people learn quicker with songs. So teaching songs in the language creates material that we can use – that way it's there for the next generation.²²⁷

Ningewance Nadeau has been a leader in the development of ASL resources.

She is the author of several books including a complete ASL package called *Talking Gookom's Language*, which includes the main text, a workbook, and an audio CD that is integrated into the exercises. She described how she developed this resource.

I have not been teaching at the university for three years now – maybe even four – but I have been writing. I have been using that time to write and publish my own books and sometimes writing for other people. Since then I have done Talking Gookom's Language and the workbook that goes with it. Talking Gookom's Language comes from another book I wrote maybe ten or twelve years ago called Survival Ojibwe. That was my first adventure... It's complete because it has got the exercises in there. It's got stories and stuff like that. That was my first attempt, but the second book is bigger. The phrasebook came out three years ago now. I believe in that concept because I think it's a way of having a book that is so small that it is transportable. Put it in your pocket and learn phrases wherever you are if you are traveling to a community where they speak only that language or if you are in a work situation to talk to your clients.

I didn't know what I was doing. My experience in teaching was learning other languages as a student. My language teachers were my models. So at least I had that. I had some idea of the structure of my language.

I'll just finish the comments I made about the phrasebook. That phrasebook has two purposes. One is for total beginners – something that they could use at hand. I wrote it so that the words and every phrase can be pronounced because there is a pronunciation guide on each page. It is also for speakers of the language if they need terminology: legal, medical, social work. I have included all those words that I have learned along the way. Especially terminology pertaining to nature: plants, birds, fish. I was in New Zealand and of course the Native people there are reclaiming their language after almost losing it and they are very well funded. Apart from the language nests that they are operating, they are also promoting language to the public. I saw three or four different kinds of phrasebooks just for one language on one small island. So if they can

²²⁷ Osawamick, interview.

*do that to promote their language in such a small area, I think that's what we should do here. So that's why I wrote that book.*²²⁸

Ningewance Nadeau also hoped to see an NSL magazine that would be available to all Indigenous language teachers.

*Something else I would like to see happen is the idea of starting a Native language newspaper, not newspaper, a magazine. Not in the language because we have so many languages, but a magazine for teachers of native languages. Not just in Canada and the United States, but other countries where Indigenous peoples struggle to keep their languages. I don't think such a magazine exists... a way to share success stories and what people are doing.*²²⁹

Alan Corbiere taught himself the eastern dialect of Anishinaabemowin that is used in the Georgian Bay area near Manitoulin Island using existing language resources created by two other research participants in this study: Mary Ann Naokwegijig-Corbiere and Basil Johnston. Corbiere credited Johnston's work for providing cultural knowledge and Ojibwe philosophy that is embedded in Anishinaabemowin. Naokwegijig-Corbiere's work guides ASL learners through the transition to Anishinaabemowin grammar and particularly the syntactical challenges of forming correct sentences in Ojibwe. According to Corbiere, their work is complementary and can support a learner to gain proficiency in the eastern dialect of Anishinaabemowin.²³⁰ When other learners ask him for advice on how he managed to gain such proficiency as an ASL learner, he advises learning stories in the language supplemented by the language resources created by Johnston and Naokwegijig-Corbiere.

²²⁸ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²²⁹ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²³⁰ Corbiere, interview.

The importance of affordable and effective ASL resources cannot be overstated because few Anishinaabeg have the money or time to spend years immersing themselves in the language. The chronic underfunding of Indigenous language teaching was a recurrent theme throughout the research process. The specific issue of AR funding will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter Five. For now, a reminder of these financial constraints is important in order to identify the most appropriate and realistic ASL methods that are currently available.

Isadore Toulouse described the predicament of trying to produce much needed ASL resources with limited financing possibilities that are often borne by the authors.

And there are very few people that have published their own resources. I have a few resources, Shirley Williams has a few resources, Martina Osawamick has a few resources. There's a few people out there that have worked diligently to get resources out there. But these cost money. And government provides grants to publish and help continue the resources, but you don't get to own them, the government gets to own these resources. And that's where the trouble comes in. So a lot of the little guys that want to publish material, they're afraid they're going to lose the rights to their material. So that's how I got around that, I publish my own material. I pay for my own things, out of my own pocket to publish my books. Same with the other people I've mentioned, they've got their own publishing companies to create these glossy resource materials that are now used in schools. Which is a small step, but it's something that to me, I don't think we should be paying for it, the government or First Nation communities paying for these things to be able to have them in the school system and school programs. It's a lot of work.²³¹

Shirley Williams described having to start from scratch when creating curriculum for Anishinaabemowin at Trent University in the beginning of her teaching career.

I was hired here to teach the language, then I thought, "What do students really want to learn?" So my first day of classes I talked to them and I asked them, "What is it that you would like to learn?" They wrote it in little pieces of paper and that is where I started to develop the curriculum. So

²³¹ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

the curriculum that you see now is the result of the first year students in 1986. From there, I just expanded more. I've done curriculum research. I've done books on Anishinaabemowin. When you work in university you have to publish and research so it fit right in to the criteria that I was working at. From there I began doing research on the language; incorporating the academic side to looking at our language side, linguistically and all of these things that go with the language. So I developed language texts for the courses that I have done. The first taught introduction, and then intermediate, and the advanced courses here. I have done an immersion language course here at the university for those students that want to learn about reading and writing...

I have done a lot of things. Right now I'm in the process of making flash cards, but phonetic writing - words that begin with the long vowels and short vowels. I'm making teacher packages so that they can teach in that way and workbooks for the students so that they can learn how to read and write. I've been writing stories, also some literature for Anishinabek News. I write articles in Anishinaabe and I've decided to do it bilingually so that everybody has a chance to read. I hear from different people I've spoken to that they look forward to the articles because they can use them as practice reading for their kids or they use it in classrooms. I've done hockey CD Rom on Zhooshkwaadekamogad. It's called "Rip Roaring Hockey" and that came out several years ago, about 10 years ago I think it was. At Lakehead, the Anishinaabeg faculty, the ones that work with the language, and the students that work with language, we were talking one time about how we teach the language. English has ABC songs. So to get our students interested and to learn also the language or the sounds of the language, we were saying that we should have our own. English has ABC song, we should have our Anishinaabe sounds in a song. Three ladies from Rama, who knew how to sing, developed the vowel song, it's called Kidwaansan. That's the one that they sing to teach the sounds and it works. It works!²³²

The development of language materials is crucial to supporting the growing number of second language learners. Osawamick advised learners to create their own immersion environments by having Anishinaabemowin audio material in the background whenever possible.

Always instead of listening to music or the radio, pop in those CDs in the language. Always constantly hear that language. Just before you go to bed, put that Ojibwe CD on and then you hear it. So if you're constantly hearing these words, and then you'll be able to hear those sounds. When

²³² Williams, interview.

*I first teach, I teach the sounds of the Anishinaabemowin. Once you learn and master those sounds, it'll help you to make those sounds in Ojibwe. Then it'll help you with the writing and learning how to read in Ojibwe.*²³³

Both Johnston and Naokwegijig-Corbiere have significant audio components to their respective language programs. This is crucial in second language learning because ASL students may not have had prior exposure to Anishinaabemowin phonology (sound system). This is less of a problem in face-to-face teaching because the instructor can provide proper pronunciation, but distance education provides unique challenges. Traditionally, correspondence courses would have relied entirely on written descriptions of the sound system. Developments in communication technology have allowed for more accurate replication of language sounds and many ASL materials include an audiocassette, CD or DVD.

Distance education courses have been developed by Mary Ann Naokwegijig-Corbiere and have been delivered by Cambrian College and the University of Sudbury. Initially, Naokwegijig-Corbiere adopted language-teaching strategies, but she realized that they were Anglo-centric approaches that required modification.

There was, they call them course designer or instructional designer, who was assigned, that was a key part of the team for each correspondence course project. I was fortunate that I had one that was an excellent coach in terms of taking what I knew in speaking the language and then translating that into various step-by-step format for learners at a distance who don't necessarily have speakers next door or within the household to help them. So she was very good in training me on how to take all our complex sentences and to start them from very basic short sentences for beginners who have never heard the language before. ... So the first year that I used the first introductory course that we developed, and again being inexperienced in all this and never having studied how to teach a

²³³ Osawamick, interview.

second language of any kind whether its my language or English or French, I wasn't able to spot right away how Anglo-centric her approach was. ... The Anglo-centric approach, they very typically start off with "I" and "You" sentences: "My name is," "What is your name?" and so on. Even the terminology of the person reflects that Anglo-centric approach, the first person is I, the second person is you, the third person is he or she.

So after using that first manual we drafted for a few years I realized, "Yes, logically when you go by persons, that makes sense. But in terms of orientating absolute beginners in this language to compose sensible Anishinaabemowin sentences you are starting from something more complex and then backstepping to something that is the simplest in our language, "He" or "She" sentences, and then going back to something more complex and I thought, "Okay, we're going to change the order of this."

I think logically our language should start with the easiest sentences," such as the one word verb sentences, like "Ngamo," "She sings," or "Nokii," "He's working," and introduce students to, "Okay, first of all, this short one word thing is a complete sentence. You don't need a word for "he" or "she" necessarily, you don't need a word for "is", so get used to using verbs in this way and you are actually speaking complete sentences now. And then once we get the hang of that, now we can move on to adding other things like different tenses. You can say, "He worked," "Gii-nokii," and "She sang," "Gii-ngamo." And later on in the second half course, after Christmas we get into "I" and "You" sentences because then you need to add another prefix to the mix. So that's - although it seems like a long time- it's taken a lot of false starts to get the hang of what might be the most logical way to enable students to begin using this language effectively and expressing their thoughts about things."²³⁴

Naokwegijig-Corbiere described how she created a complete computer course that was most effective for ASL distance education. The revised manuals were placed in a digital format with embedded audio files so that students could see the words and hear how to pronounce them at the same time.

So we had to split up the content in slightly different ways, more manageable ways and also work in some interactivity so that they could put the cursor on a certain thing to hear the word. Whereas with a correspondence course you can see the black and white paper explanation, you see the exercises. And there is a CD you can plunk in to

²³⁴ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

hear the things, whereas with the CD ROM the only major difference is that instead of plunking in a CD separately to hear the things and read them separately, there are, we tried to work in as much as possible, when they are working through an example, you can click on it, "Oh let me hear how this is said, how this sounds." There is a sentence, like "She is cooking," they see the English and how it is said in Anishinaabemowin. They see how it's spelled and they can click right on it to hear then – what they're seeing – how it actually sounds, "Jiibaakwe."²³⁵

Naokwegijig-Corbiere also believed that using distance learning teaching methods can stretch limited resources further. She found that there are very few students taking advanced Anishinaabemowin courses and that some arrangement could be made between different post-secondary institutions to take turns hosting these courses online.

So how do we serve the two or three advanced students at Trent, two or three in advanced here, and two or three advanced in Algoma , where individually these universities can't? We'd cancel the course [due to] not enough enrollment. So if we could do something together we could rotate. We could set up an online thing so that one year, Algoma is the principal teacher, but those students elsewhere get permission to take these online courses so it has a viable enrollment of seven or nine. ... I get so frustrated because I know how interested and how important the language is to some of these people. For them, it's like, "I want my language back. I want as much of it as I can, I will master all you have."²³⁶

Creating a language-rich environment for a dispersed population requires the mass production of Anishinaabemowin multimedia that can be disseminated and broadcast over a vast area. This leads to the challenge of how Anishinaabeg can develop their own Anishinaabe mass media.

²³⁵ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

²³⁶ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

Develop ASL Mass Media and New Media

Pat Ningewance Nadeau began teaching the language in the 1970s and was soon recruited to develop Anishinaabemowin programming for both broadcast and print mass media.

I was hired to start an Ojibwe language bilingual newspaper Wawatay News. In northwestern Ontario we didn't have any communications at all. Telephone or electricity or anything like that. No roads up there so my job was to start a newsletter that people could use as a vehicle for communication. People didn't speak English very well, but could read and write in syllabics so it was totally bilingual. At first it was called Giizis. It became Wawatay News, which is still running as a healthy newspaper. It still has some articles in syllabics. It also has TV and radio – it's a very viable organization. I also edited shortly after I left there, I edited syllabic books for publication - that was with Indian Affairs. These were stories written by Native people. Then, over the years teaching I taught Ojibwe at Lakehead University for about six years I think, off-campus and sometimes on-campus teaching Education students – people who were training to be teachers in northwestern Ontario and southern Ontario too.

...

Then I moved to Winnipeg and I took a TV production training course at Wawatay because they were now getting ready to do TV. I audited the course to learn what is involved in writing and producing, because they do only native language programming there. So that was a very useful skill to learn and shortly after I got here I was hired by the Manitoba Association for Native Languages. They had a program where they were offering programs to urban Native people to revive or enrich their languages. That was one of the best jobs I ever had. I was funded to work with Native people in the city - to get a group of Native people, Elders, together – these were people who were 70 or 80, really wonderful people, Ojibwe or Cree mostly. We would gather them and have them in our conferences or workshops to share their information, share their knowledge. And I put together an evening course for parents and children to learn language together. I wrote my first book at that time, which was called Anishinaabemodaa: Becoming a Successful Ojibwe Eavesdropper. We had puppets that we used. I don't know where those puppets are now. Eddy Esban, characters like that. Another project was to have a cable TV show. At that time, Shaw Cable had free programming for people from community organizations so we had a one-hour show every week. We had funding where we could bring people by taxi if they didn't have transportation. We fed them, we produced a set, we had a talk show with

*Elders. We taught the language. It was just really good, a really good program.*²³⁷

Ningewance Nadeau hoped that Anishinaabe mass media can support AR efforts as Maori have done in New Zealand. She acknowledged the significant costs, but hoped that Anishinaabe television could provide programming in Anishinaabemowin.²³⁸ Ningewance Nadeau proposed that dubbing existing multimedia into Anishinaabemowin is the most cost-effective way of developing audiovisual language materials for ASL.

*There's a need for trained fluent people to be able to act and do voice-overs in recording studios so that audio dramas and taped stories could be produced. It's expensive using unskilled people in studios because you're paying for the studio time. But we need these kinds of products for language courses. It is expensive to do original production of Native language videos and films. One cheap way might be to take documentaries and do voice-overs of them in Ojibwe, Cree, etc. Then you can put on the transcription of the voice-over as subtitle so that students can read the language as it is being spoken. They would already have been introduced to the vocabulary and know the grammar to understand what's being said. Eventually, they could view the same video, but without subtitles and they would be able to understand the language. Films older than 50 years old can be voiced over freely (legally) and that would be fun. Dracula speaks Cree. And then there are the cartoons. They would be easier to do because then you don't have to worry about matching the dialogue with the actors' lip flaps, as Donald Duck doesn't have lips.*²³⁹

Existing Anishinaabemowin television programs are popular with ASL learners as well as fluent speakers.

*When I was in Kitchener, I recorded some programs off of APTN, like Tipi Tales. They have that in Ojibwe and there's other programs on there. There's a good one right on there now, it's called Cry of the Loon. I've seen that a few times, that's really awesome, I wanted to get that one recorded or buy the DVD set for that series. It's a fishing show.*²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²³⁸ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²³⁹ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²⁴⁰ Bebamash, interview.

Another participant who is an ASL learner of Anishinaabemowin praised Aboriginal Voices Radio in Ontario for broadcasting language lessons and short stories about the language.

*I listen to AVR, Aboriginal Voices Radio. Miigwech Aboriginal Voices Radio! Because Basil Johnston's on there and he does Anishinaabemowin and I get to hear that, if I'm at home, I can hear him talking and tell stories about the language and I just love listening to that... He comes on at different times of the day, and he tells stories, and he does Anishinaabemowin, and it's cool!*²⁴¹

There are already many dedicated online groups or websites that exist specifically to promote Anishinaabemowin. Examples include a Yahoo based online group, Ojibwe Language Society Miinawaa, which has over 1200 members and has been in existence since 2002. Those seeking assistance with translation most frequently use the site, but it also includes helpful features such as “4 Ojibwe Words of the Day.”²⁴² The site is somewhat limited because it is primarily text-based, but it offers links to other websites that are more interactive. Several include audio and video that can be used as resources in a classroom or for independent study. Nelson Toulouse was amazed while attending a conference in New Zealand with how new media technology has been integrated into Maori language revitalization.

I think technology is so advanced that we can use it to our advantage. Young people are so knowledgeable in technology today and I've seen different things. What I found amazing is when I was in New Zealand at the world indigenous education conference they launched Microsoft Maori. So if we can teach computer programs to speak the language kids are hooked up to it. And there's other things being developed, but we need resources to purchase those things and have them housed in schools and

²⁴¹ Absolon, interview.

²⁴² Ojibwe Language Society Miinawaa, “Ojibwe Language Society Miinawaa,” Homepage, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OjibweLanguageSocietyMiinawaa/> (accessed June 12, 2009).

*even have them in households.*²⁴³

Part of the interest in new media stems from the belief that youth will find such forms of language learning more appealing and engaging.

*A lot of our young students were saying, "I don't want to learn the language. It's black and white and it's homemade." It had a negative connotation. We were hurt to hear that, but we had to turn that around. How do we restore that pride because that's the ideology from the residential schools: that your language is not important. How do we make our language turn that around into a positive so that we can restore pride and dignity to our people? Going back, restoring what damages have been done through history through colonialism. How do we work together in order to revive that?*²⁴⁴

Williams and her colleagues realized that there was a lack of resource material for youth of high school age. Elders advised consulting youth about how learning language might better match their interests.

There's lots of material for adults, but there was none between the high school ages. We were asking the Elders, "What can we do in order to encourage our youth to learn the language?" They don't seem to want to learn the language. They get turned off either in Grade 7 or Grade 8. They're saying to the teachers, "I don't have to learn the language. I'm already Indian. It's not going to make me more Indian if I know the language."

So we were saying, "How do we do this?" The Elders said, "Have you ever gone to them and asked them what they would like to learn?" Of course, we hadn't done that. It's going to them and them telling you what they would like to learn. From there you can develop the curriculum. We decided to go to young people what they would like to learn. Of course, they said, "Sports!" I realized that we didn't have anything in the language on sports. I mean we have language in the sports, but nothing material-wise. ... I was sitting at home and I was toying around about sports. I thought, "I know the boys used to play hockey," and I was watching TV at that time and flipping through the channels and all of a sudden I hit Wawatay News. In there, they were playing hockey at a hockey tournament somewhere up north. The commentator happened to be talking about hockey and all of a sudden he says, "Oonh. Nishke wa,

²⁴³ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

²⁴⁴ Williams, interview.

moowebaganan zhiwebaan corner-ing.” Well, I started to laugh. ‘Corner’ is the English word, ‘ing’ makes it locative so you have “Oji-glish.”

Of course I started to laugh and I thought, “Hey, what a great idea to make a hockey CD-ROM.” Those CD-ROMs were just coming in then. The idea came in to my head, “Why not make a hockey CD-ROM?” ... We came up with the word “Zhooskwaadekamogad” - hockey or “Rip-Roaring Hockey.” ... When we started we listed all of the words in English and then we did it in Anishinaabe. Then the words that we could not come up with, we had to do research. The people I told about my research, I was told to go to old men who used to play hockey, that know about hockey and those are the people that we went and talked to - the ones that played hockey and know the language also because they would know what to call different things. Of course, I had a lot of fun in researching. About a year and half, I think, I travelled around different hockey tournaments in Anishinaabe-kiing. Me, being shy, and walking up to older men if I know them, “How do you say this?” and then I'd have to explain what I was doing and why. The word we got stuck on was “jockstrap.” Oh jeez. (laughter) That was a fun part. So I would go around asking them and a lot of them gave me this double look. I got snide remarks such as “What good is it to you to want to know?” and then I'd have to go through the explanation of what I was doing. After I had told them, they were very willing to tell me or they would say, “If I know I will tell you.” That way, it was very rewarding to do it. ... So it took me 6 years.²⁴⁵

Williams' story exemplifies the challenges involved in developing quality resources and particularly those based in multimedia. Significant, but still largely unrealized, potential for AR exists in new media including Internet-based communication which permit real-time web video chats. These are particularly valuable for language instruction because they permit face-to-face interaction that allows learners to observe articulation and accompanying physical gestures.

However, too much faith in technology to reverse language loss is also dangerous. Alan Corbiere notes that reliance on technology can be taken to extremes that may lead learners to postpone learning the language now in the hope that technology will eventually take the effort out of language-learning.

²⁴⁵ Williams, interview.

I find everybody wants the easiest way to get it. Everyone's waiting for a microchip to be developed that they'll just insert it in our brain and we'll be speaking Ojibwe. If that ends up happening, of course, you could just insert that microchip into anybody, Zhaagnaash, Mkade-Wiyyaas, miinwaa gaye Niibiishaabooke-nini they call them zaaw-izid. So and then what have you really have learned or understood when it's instant like that? So anyway, it takes work to pass it on.²⁴⁶

The Future of Anishinaabemowin Revitalization?

I asked participants to imagine an ideal ASL program that could exist without resource constraints and they responded with enthusiastic visions of AR. These visions were in three broad areas: expand immersion programs; initiate “whole family” language programs; and set up language clubs or “sanctuaries.” Each will be briefly explained to provide a possible glimpse into the future of AR.

Expand Immersion Opportunities and Programs

All participants supported the need for more immersion opportunities and several responded to this question by describing “ideal” immersion programs.²⁴⁷ Isadore

²⁴⁶ Corbiere, interview.

²⁴⁷ Kipp, *Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned*. Kipp provides a guide for establishing an Indigenous immersion program based on his experience with the Blackfeet Piegan Institute’s Cut-Bank Language Immersion School. He advises that starting an immersion school is a challenge and it will take at least a few years to develop the program. However, acting quickly is crucial as the situation will only continue to deteriorate. Kipp recommends beginning with 5 or 6 students who are around 4 years old and then adding a new group each year at this age. Begin with basic necessary phrases, practice them constantly, and use methods such as Total Physical Response which involve acting out the words and phrases as they are spoken (29-31). Children should be constantly immersed in the language so Kipp advises against setting up bilingual programs. 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.

Toulouse hoped to see a complete immersion school that had all subjects taught in Ojibwe.

If I won the lottery, I'd build a school and I'd hire fluent speakers that are currently teachers. Fluent speakers, and just teach in the language. Teach math, science, English, geography, whatever those courses that the ministry requires, teach them in the language, because statistics say those with two or more languages have a higher success in education and I think seeing that and understanding that, the teachers that I would hire would be fluent speakers to make sure they're always speaking in the classroom telling the kids what to do in the language. It doesn't matter if they don't understand, but the continuous speaking and hearing the language, I think that's the only way the language will be revived, the language will be retained in our communities.²⁴⁸

Alan Corbiere was inspired by the approach taken by Brian Maracle and others working in Six Nations of the Grand River. He described how they have managed to transform an economic development program into a broader project of restoring a strong Onkwehonwe identity through culture and language immersion.

A lot of First Nations now have this local delivery mechanism (LDM) where they have economic development people who need to get retrained or enter the workforce, they used to call it manpower back in the '70s, but now they call it the local delivery mechanism. But what they're doing in Six Nations is they get those people, they're like 20-40 year old people, they have to sign up for this, they have to take a test to get into the immersion program. And instead of teaching them a trade, they're actually teaching them about themselves, teaching their language. Their whole foundational premise is that these guys are out of work, these guys have quit school, they've quit whatever else because they don't have a fully developed self-concept and this language, this Mohawk language, and this language program is going to fill this self-concept so that when they leave, when they start in September and leave in June, they're going to have a greater sense of self-identity and that's going to help them enter the workforce. So that's what they use for their LDM, at the beginning of the year, the fellow teaches them an immersion style, half day English theoretical description of what the language is and the other half day is

It's debatable, a loaded word. Use the word language. The culture comes from the language (6).

²⁴⁸ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

immersion style in Mohawk and then they gradually, and maybe it was a quarter to three quarters, but by the time they get to June, there's no English spoken in that language class. They've done a gradual style, having those students learn the concepts and the theory, the grammar and the vocabulary from an English base because that's their base, they're a first speaker of English language and they want to become a second language speaker of Mohawk so by the time they go through that and done in June, they're a second language Mohawk speaker. They're not complete masters, of course, but the fellow who implements that program, his name is Brian Maracle, he actually told me he has some students that went through that program that are beyond him now, who are better masters of the program because they've gone on to become immersion teachers at the school and they've gone to work with the Elders themselves and then they work with the language all the time, whereas Brian, come September he has to start with English or half English or three quarter English one quarter Mohawk and then build up his gradation again. But those guys they are immersion teachers all year round in Mohawk and they've surpassed the teacher in some cases.²⁴⁹

There are already plans to develop such a model at Shingwauk Kinooomaage

Gamig.

We want to do a pilot project. Maybe seek out 10-15 young people and just do full immersion. Different classes for eight hours a day and it will be full immersion whether we're talking geography, political science, science, whatever courses we want to do it all in Ojibwe. We want to test it and see how successful it can be. We believe, that if we're able to do that, within three years or four years or five years we can produce fluent speakers. That's the goal: to produce fluent speakers. Because we know that many studies have been done, both regionally and nationally that our languages are rapidly disappearing. What are we going to do about it? We talked about this or that, but I think we need to have clear strategy and goals to say this is what we're going to do with them. In terms of institution-building, Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig can be the centre where we can do language revitalization and that we can save, promote and preserve an important and sacred language that belongs to us for the next seven generations. That's how far I think we need to look into the future. It's not only about today, but what about seven generations from now? Are people still going to be speaking this language? We want to ensure that that happens through Shingwauk.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Corbiere, interview.

²⁵⁰ Boissoneau, interview.

Barb Nolan believes such an approach can also work outside of educational institutions in either reserve or urban communities.

I do believe that a community can create adult speakers. I do believe that. The best place to start is with the babies. That's the best place to start. But you can along with this other pot of money, say we have some left over, the other wish would be that you give, say in one community, 10 young people's job is to acquire the language. Put them on a salary. "Your job is to acquire the language." Then you would have to find some speakers and you have to train them on how to deliver comprehensible input. You just can't place a speaker there and say, 'Go to it'. That speaker must be trained in how to deliver comprehensible input. There is a certain trick to the trade. So, you have 10 young people that want to acquire the language. You must have individuals who have the inner desire to speak the language at one point. You give them 40 hours a week of comprehensible input. They could either go in and live with that speaker or you can have a place where they all come and gather. They live there maybe 10 hours a day, even, so many days a week. By the end of three years, those individuals will be starting to come out with sayings and will be starting to acquire the language and be producing spontaneous speech.²⁵¹

Lorena Fontaine made the most ambitious proposal for establishing new institutions dedicated to Anishinaabemowin: an Anishinaabe school system that would be linked throughout Anishinaabe-aki.

I would see Elders being a part of the program and I would go as far as saying a school system not just a school program. We are not just dealing with a small segment of a population, we are dealing with Anishinaabeg people from Ontario and Manitoba and down in the States. I think if we want to envision a school system then I think it would encompass all those different territories and the people that live in those territories. I envision Elders from those territories designing the school system and when it is completed families including children will all attend. I think that a sustainable way of maintaining language is to promote it and direct it at the community. I also see children learning about some of our ceremonial objects such as how they are used and the stories behind them. I would also hope that the school system would be designed so that children learn about traditional teachings and our creation story, but also that they get a good education in the core areas such as math and science, and arts. All

²⁵¹ Nolan, interview.

*of the other things that the school system has, but I guess with the cultural component in there.*²⁵²

Fontaine also wished that her family could learn together in an immersion environment, but no such program was then available in Winnipeg, Manitoba.²⁵³

This vision of family-focused ASL teaching is the subject of the next section.

Initiate Whole Family Language Programs

Many other participants hoped to see ASL opportunities for all ages and specific programs to support families learning together. Such a teaching environment or method is often referred to as the “whole family approach” which seeks to avoid the situation where children learn a language without the involvement and support of their parents in the home. Maya Chacaby described a similar program that is being considered in Toronto.

*What I would like to see more of, and this comes from conversations I have had with many of the language leaders that I look up to who are my role models, I would like to see more projects that take the whole family into account. One of the things that was talked about was having a home visiting program so that fluent language speakers go in once a week with a family, and give them a lesson plan, practice with them and then it is the family's responsibility to practice it throughout the week. Then they come back the next week, review what they learned and go on to the next lesson plan. But that takes money and organizing and resources. I hope to do something like that in the next couple of years. That's something that parents talk about when their children are in the class – they want their children to learn, but they haven't learned. So the children are learning it at school, but they are not using it at all. It's something in my personal life - I would like my family to be speaking it.*²⁵⁴

Alan Corbiere also hoped to provide similar family support for existing language programs.

²⁵² Fontaine, interview.

²⁵³ Fontaine, interview.

²⁵⁴ Chacaby, interview.

If you had an after-school program for the kids in Ojibwe and you had speakers teaching the children and reinforcing what was learned in the school and then you have a parallel program for those parents of those kids so that when they go home, they reinforce that with each other. Because what ends up happening now, kids are learning the Ojibwe language vocabulary in the schools, but they don't actually get to share that or use it in the homes because the parents can't speak.²⁵⁵

Nelson Toulouse also advocated seeing AR as a community-wide project that should not be left to the schools alone.

Because what happens with immersion schools, when starting at the ground level, kids are like sponges they absorb the language so they go home with the language. And of course the young parents don't know so they are asking, they are trying to ask, for support in the language as well. You simply can't plan a language immersion program in a school, you basically have got to develop a whole community language strategy. And incidentally it's one of the things the commission is developing, a template for communities.²⁵⁶

Barb Nolan hoped to see a comprehensive language program that begins at infancy and supports learning Anishinaabemowin up into adulthood.

Start with the babies and do a language nest - what they call a language nest.²⁵⁷ Of course you have to have your human resources. You have to have speakers that can be with those babies for most of the day. Parents enroll their children in this language nest from 8:00 in the morning until 5:00 at night. When they go to work, they bring the babies there. While the babies are there, they are being spoken to in the language. While

²⁵⁵ Corbiere, interview.

²⁵⁶ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

²⁵⁷ Barb Nolan is referring to the flagship Maori model for language revitalization that began in 1982 when "they started a Maori immersion preschool movement, called Te Kohanga Ro, which translates as 'the language nest' and utilizes fluent Maori-speaking elders."

The main features of these preschools were that Maori was the only language to be spoken and heard, no smoking was allowed, they were to be kept very clean in the interest of health, and parents and preschool teachers were the decision makers. The preschools spread rapidly, and by 1998, there were more than six hundred. As more and more Maori-speaking children graduated from these preschools, parents who wanted their children's Maori education continued in the public schools put pressure on New Zealand's government to establish Maori immersion elementary schools, then secondary schools, and finally Maori language university programs.

Reyhner, *Contemporary Native American*, 61.

their diaper is being changed, while they are being fed they are being spoken to in the language only. Every word that is being spoken in that building or that place is in the language. You take them from newborn and keep them until three or four years old when they go to junior kindergarten or follow them into daycare. The language must follow that child into daycare. It must follow it into kindergarten, into grade one, into grade two, etc. So you're building from that language nest. You start off with 10 kids. There has to be support for the families who bring their babies there because, most likely, the parents will not be speakers. You are going to be creating bilingual children because they are still going to be hearing English at home. We have to be very careful with these children that by the time they get to school, you must follow them along with total immersion in grade one, grade two, grade three. It must be total immersion. So we need teachers who happen to be speakers of the language or, if we don't have teachers who are speakers of the language, then we must find young people who are speakers and send them to teachers college or early childhood education or infant toddler care programs where they will get the credentials to work in these places where you need them. Like I said, there must be support built in for the parents as well, because once their kids start speaking the language, they're going to be "Hey, what about me?" So there has to be some sort of thing built in for them.²⁵⁸

Set Up Language Sanctuaries and Resource Centres

Both of the above visions of expanded immersion opportunities and initiated whole family programs would benefit from physical spaces to gather to coordinate, plan, and teach Anishinaabemowin. Many participants specifically mentioned the need to establish schools but a few spoke of other types of establishments as well. For example, Pat Ningewance Nadeau wished for the creation of Anishinaabe cultural clubs similar to those of ethnic communities in Canadian cities.

If I won 6-49, if I won several million dollars, I would want to have a club like the different nations people from other nations, they have the Italian club or whatever. I would like to have a club where people could just go there to speak in the language. There's a restaurant, there's activities where you would have monolinguals come there and use the language

²⁵⁸ Nolan, interview.

*and that would be the purpose of the place: like a sanctuary, a language sanctuary.*²⁵⁹

Shirley Williams hoped for an Anishinaabemowin resource development centre to create materials that language teachers could use in their classrooms.

*If I had a lot of money or if I won Super 7 or 6-49, I would develop a place where curriculum would be developed and materials developed for language programs. Although, right now, in Wikwemikong I think they're developing a lot of good materials as I just came from there. There are a lot of materials coming out now, which is really good, but we need more. The more we have, the better it will be for our schools and libraries.*²⁶⁰

Liz Osawamick made a similar wish for a ceremonial and language lodge that would serve both roles as a resource development centre and a language sanctuary in Peterborough, Ontario.²⁶¹ She saw this lodge as a place where Elders could immerse language learners in the Anishinaabe language and cultural teachings.

Kathy Absolon envisioned a network of Indigenous learning centres for cultural and linguistic decolonization.

How come in our towns and cities, we don't have a multitude of Indigenous learning centres? There was, and this gets into the historical thrust of the government to exterminate our language and our culture and our people. There was so much resources, money, administration, policies, people power, education that was put into eradicating our language and our people and our way of life, everything, and the government did that because there was a will to do that at that time. I believe that if we had unlimited resources we could reverse that. We could put resources into our schools and have our languages in schools. That we could have, for example, the whole structure would have to change. This is my vision: the whole structure to eradicate us would have to be reversed. So professional development for me wouldn't be going to learn about, it would be going to learn my language, it would be going to immersion schools, it would be going to ceremonies, it would be going toward making a strong Anishinaabe person in everything. It would be so

²⁵⁹ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²⁶⁰ Williams, interview.

²⁶¹ Osawamick, interview.

that we would have our learning centres and our spaces on the land at our sacred sites, where we could go and teach our children hunting and fishing and about that our life comes from the land. We could take our young girls berry picking and we could learn to do that in the language so language isn't just irrelevant to context in which it's supposed to exist because there's a context in our language that belongs, it's in a relationship to the earth, in a relationship to all of creation, to the human family, to the animals and to spirits.²⁶²

Conclusion

Anishinaabeg have made significant progress in developing ASL pedagogies and programs for children and adults both on and off-reserve. However, these efforts have yet to produce significant numbers of fluent Anishinaabemowin speakers and there is a growing sense of concern and frustration among many AR advocates. The task is growing increasingly urgent, yet the vast majority of Anishinaabeg remain oblivious to Anishinaabemowin's vulnerability. Alan Corbiere wondered if many are complacent because they do not understand how quickly language shift can and has already occurred in his community.

Sometimes I wonder if it has to get even worse before people are compelled to do something... I used to say this five years ago, that we are lulled into a false sense of security. Because all my parents speak, you figure, "Oh they're going to be around, I still got time to learn it and this and that. There's aunts and uncles that can speak and this and that." So you have this false sense of security that everyone is going to be around for a long time, but the clock's actually ticking. I was saying that five years ago, but how many Elders have we lost here that were fully fluent in the language?²⁶³

Corbiere is especially disheartened when he sees young parents on Manitoulin Island who are Anishinaabemowin speakers, but are failing to pass it on to their children. He cited Joshua Fishman's seminal work *Reversing Language Shift*

²⁶² Absolon, interview.

²⁶³ Corbiere, interview.

and the importance of maintaining intergenerational transmission for long-term AR success.

Looking at Joshua Fishman's stages of Reversing Language Shift...the main one was securing intergenerational transmission. He says, if you don't secure that, it is all for naught and now I see he is absolutely right. So what people are doing is getting involved and getting the government to translate things into Ojibwe, which in the long run I guess you'll be able to use that as a resource, but how resourceful is it? ... For the overall endeavor of assuring Anishinaabe survival and revival, it isn't a crucial piece. It's a pamphlet ... What's happening now as we speak, we got a lot of people, especially in Wiky [Wiwemikong] our age that are having children that can speak Ojibwe and they'll speak Ojibwe to their friends, to their parents and their aunts and uncles, but when it comes to it, they turn to their children and speak to them in English. It's a whole mentality that just has to change, that hasn't changed because it's still going on. And the people there that can speak Ojibwe for whatever reason they don't speak it to their children. And that's one of the things that needs to be further investigated.²⁶⁴

The following chapter takes up Corbiere's challenge to restore Anishinaabe pride in their ancestral language. By changing Anishinaabe attitudes towards Anishinaabemowin, the strategies and methods profiled in this chapter can be implemented on a large enough scale to successfully turn back the tide of English that is drowning their ancient language. Chapter 4 will explore how Anishinaabeg are mobilizing a movement to revitalize Anishinaabemowin and ensure its survival for future generations.

²⁶⁴ Corbiere, interview.

Chapter Four: Mobilizing An Anishinaabemowin Revitalization Movement

This chapter explores how research participants are recruiting and organizing future Anishinaabemowin revitalization (AR) contributors and, as a result of their efforts, an Anishinaabe AR movement was born. Chapter Two explored the motivations of those already involved in language revitalization. Chapter Three profiled the substantial progress in developing Anishinaabemowin as a second language (ASL) pedagogies, programs, and resources. However, relatively few Anishinaabeg are actively maintaining and revitalizing Anishinaabemowin. This chapter seeks to go further by analyzing *how* Anishinaabeg are building a movement to revitalize Anishinaabemowin. I identified two recurring strategies that emerged during the interviews with research participants: (re-)valuing Anishinaabemowin and mobilizing Anishinaabeg. Nelson Toulouse is engaged in both strategies as he raises awareness about Indigenous language loss as chief commissioner for the AMO language commission in Ontario. He described this language advocacy work with Indigenous communities as a significant challenge in his work.

You need to shock them into reality. I think in a lot of cases as long as there's a person like me and people like me that have language, I think individuals, communities, are sort of comfortable with that. I tell them, "No you can't be comfortable with that. You can't rely on somebody else outside of your community to protect your language."²⁶⁵

Toulouse emphasized community support as a crucial aspect of successful Anishinaabemowin Revitalization (AR).

²⁶⁵ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

I think we need to really convince our own people first. The support is out there, but we need to convince our people. I can't say that we have a 100% support in terms of revitalization of languages. I've encountered some of our own people that will criticize the work that we're attempting to do.²⁶⁶

This chapter explores how AR participants are working to, in Toulouse's words, "convince our own people," to, first, value Anishinaabemowin, and then work to protect it.

Value Anishinaabemowin

Many participants felt there was general support for their AR work, but expressed frustration that most Anishinaabeg were oblivious to Anishinaabemowin's decline or had been duped into believing the language is now archaic or obsolete.

Toulouse pointed to the residual impact of residential schools and how they continue to affect perceptions of Anishinaabemowin.

It goes back to perception of the language and that goes back to what we went through in residential schools when we were punished for speaking it, how that had such an insidious effect. So on the reserves there is not much pride in the language – no emphasis on it. It has been kind of left to the schools to carry. I think that was major - people didn't pass on the language anymore, they just left it to white school, the government school to carry the language programs – to save the language.²⁶⁷

Nelson Toulouse credited the successful creation of an Anishinaabemowin immersion program in his community of Sagamok for winning over community members who were previously opposed.

So we need to convince our people and I think we've achieved that. I can cite examples though of where communities have done surveys, and the surveys are essential, especially if you are going to develop an immersion school. I mean it has to be supported by parents. So I've seen initial work that was done on support of languages and in one example there was, it

²⁶⁶ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

²⁶⁷ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

was pretty high, it was something like 78 or 76 point something % of parents supported the development of an immersion school and language was important. Now, that 24 or 25 % obviously didn't agree. After the school had been operating for two years then they did an assessment and of course they revisited the whole question. The support jumped up to 98 point something. So it works, but I mean sometimes you've got to produce a product for people to be convinced.²⁶⁸

Basil Johnston, who is working with Sagamok on its immersion program, believed that Sagamok was an exceptional case due to the high number of speakers in that community compared to the dwindling numbers on most reserves in southern Ontario.

I asked Johnston how he would encourage non-speakers to learn Anishinaabemowin, and how he would explain what the language means to him. He noted that it is very difficult to answer such a question across the language divide.

Because you're on the same wavelength, that's all I can say about it, there's some kind of a feeling, a kinship. It's really a hard thing to describe and to explain. I feel much more comfortable with people who speak the language than I do with anybody else. We have the same kind of sense for humour. We have the same kind of perception, the same kind of beliefs.²⁶⁹

Johnston offered an example of how concepts and values embed Anishinaabemowin words with meanings or understandings that are distinct from the English translations.

And so it has something to do with the idea of truth, truth in the West European sense is absolute. Not so among the Anishinaabeg, it's only the highest degree of accuracy. Because you perceive certain things and what you see is different from another person. The more accurate your perception is and the more fluent you are in language, the more accuracy you'll convey. And so to us although there is no such thing as absolute truth there is the highest degree of accuracy and this is what I follow. And

²⁶⁸ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

²⁶⁹ Johnston, interview.

I remember Sam Osawamick saying to me, I'd tell him what I understood. He'd never say you were wrong. You don't say that. What he said was, "Bkaan so genii ngiizhiiminik gzhemindoo jinzidminaa," the Great Mystery has given me a different understanding. And probably because his command of Anishinaabe language is greater than mine, his perception was more accurate, but because of that you don't find fault with another person's perception.²⁷⁰

Several research participants feared that reserves are particularly vulnerable to overestimating the number of speakers and the viability of Anishinaabemowin in their communities. One participant who has worked both on and off-reserve feared that many reserves remain in denial about the extent of language shift to English.

I think the urban setting has a better chance in revitalizing because people on the reservation, those living on the reservation, take it for granted that the language is always going to be here. That's not the case. Wake up. Children that live on the reserves, the majority of them speak English. Teachers that are brought onto these reserves are non-Native teachers and we continue to talk about self-government, self-determination, self-reliance as to educating, becoming a more prosperous people, but why do we continue hiring non-Native people to teach our children? We need to hire our own people to be able to teach, to be able to understand, to be able to see, to be able to direct, dictate as to who we are as Anishinaabe people. So I think seeing that, further to your question in relation to where would be the most successful setting for a program, an urban setting would be a better place for an institution, for a school, a program, an immersion program of some sort to bring revitalized language.²⁷¹

AR projects have been initiated throughout Anishinaabe-aki, both on and off-reserve, but can Anishinaabeg mobilize the necessary resources to ensure these projects maintain and revitalize Anishinaabemowin?

²⁷⁰ Johnston, interview.

²⁷¹ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

Apprise Anishinaabeg of the Need for AR

If people do not value the language, then why would they mobilize to develop Anishinaabemowin as a second language (ASL) pedagogies or programs?

There have been many attempts to raise awareness of language loss, and also to encourage appreciation of those working to promote Anishinaabemowin.

Anishinaabemowin Teg is the largest annual gathering to support AR and draws Anishinaabeg learners and teachers from across the continent. Isadore

Toulouse is the current president of Anishinaabemowin Teg and proudly recounted its development.

We started the Anishinaabemowin Teg back in 1994, this year is our 15th annual conference. I've been president of the Anishinaabemowin Teg for 4 terms, so 8 years. When we started the organization, we had no funds, we had no money. Most of the board members traveled, carpooled together, we shared hotel rooms together, paid out of our own expense, to go to these board meetings to get the organization's charitable status started. We all pitched in \$5-\$10 to pay the registration out of our pockets because we believed in what the organization was set out to do as part of the mission statement. From that it has evolved to a yearly language conference that has been really successful under my and the majority board of directors' direction, who hail mostly from Wiky [Wikwemikong] and Manitoulin Island area. So that tells you where the language is at in terms of revitalization, revival, retention of the language. Within Wiky itself, I think we have 150 Ojibwe language teachers teaching throughout North America, teaching in different realms of elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools.²⁷²

The conference operates in the same spirit as its early organizers intended, with a variety of workshops showcasing AR work being done at the community level.

Anishinaabemowin Teg also provides important networking and social opportunities to ASL teachers. The demands on ASL teachers are often very

²⁷² Isadore Toulouse, interview.

high because there is a lack of proficient speakers with the necessary education credentials to teach. ASL positions are often part-time, so ASL teachers work several different jobs in order to secure full-time employment. Besides volunteering as a board member for Anishinaabemowin Teg, Liz Osawamick teaches Anishinaabemowin as a second language in Peterborough and, at the time of our interview, was working four jobs.

When I came back there was a job offered in Peterborough at the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, formerly Peterborough County Board. ... So I've been teaching there ever since; teaching grades 1 to 8 in the elementary school. Because of the cutbacks, my job, which started at 0.6 which is teaching 60% of the time, and then it went to full time, and then after a while, with all the cutbacks, I was brought back down to 0.4 which is less than half time. And so I told them that I was going to leave if I found a full time job, so they created a job for me at a day care in Hiawatha... That's where I'm teaching at Marshall Public School. They had created a job there to teach the infants and toddlers. It was a great start, working two and a half hours each day for four days. It was a great experience to work with the little ones and then the public school. And then on the side, at the same time that I applied for the job at the daycare, I applied for a job here in Peterborough at Nijkiwendidaa Anishnaabe-Kwewag Services Circle as a skills development coordinator.

So I had worked the three part time jobs for two to three years. Then from there, while still here at Nijkiwendidaa now it's just the language and drumming that we do once a week on a Thursday evening. It's the clients that come out and anyone else that is interested so it's open to anyone that wants to learn the language. There was a cry for the language, so they had offered it here, as we don't have a friendship centre in Peterborough. This year, this past September, I started teaching at the high school. I have a class that I teach there as well for this semester and also next semester. It's the first time that it was offered there because my grade eights that would graduate from the public school, the children from Hiawatha, they would be sent to Thomas A Stewart secondary school in Peterborough. It was finally this year that they had offered the language program at the high school level.²⁷³

The commitment exemplified by Liz Osawamick indicates how demanding ASL work can be on its teachers. Different organizations throughout

²⁷³ Osawamick, interview.

Anishinaabe-aki have instituted honouring ceremonies for ASL workers. In the early 1990s, Pat Ningewance Nadeau helped start a Native Language Festival in Winnipeg to support all of the Indigenous languages spoken there.

*The other thing that I started at that time was a Native Language Festival that would take place in the springtime around March. It was put together to tell stories or perform in short skits or short plays or to sing, anything like that to showcase the language and show our pride in the language with children and Elders there. So that's still going on and that was 18 years ago.*²⁷⁴

Aboriginal Language Manitoba (ALM) runs the Language Festival and also serves as a central resource centre for a variety of language services, including translation services and language materials. Sault College in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, hosts and organizes an “Annual Anishinaabemowin Love Your Language Day” that honours local and surrounding area language teachers, Elders, and others who promote its use. Melvin Peltier helps coordinate the event and believed “...the biggest honour is the recognition...[because] a lot of teachers don't get that nowadays.”²⁷⁵ A feast is held and people are publicly recognized around Valentine's Day.

*Sault College cares and the community cares. They come and they get to know all these people that work to keep the language alive in this community from different organizations, like Native Friendship Centre, they have a language program. Some of the high schools have language teachers now that are given opportunities for the students to learn it. Many of our public schools now, our young ones are learning it.*²⁷⁶

Other examples of community-linked activities include drumming nights, arts and crafts, and Elders' talks. Sault College serves as a cultural centre for the urban

²⁷⁴ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²⁷⁵ Peltier, interview.

²⁷⁶ Peltier, interview.

Anishinaabe community and it has responded by supporting its Native student programming and instructors.

Part of supporting each other's efforts is resisting denigration of others' attempts. Many of the AR participants shared stories of how they have been criticized for their teaching.²⁷⁷ Some are criticized simply for speaking Anishinaabemowin, but most disputes arise over issues of dialect and literacy. Howard Webkamigad describes how he has been attacked on both issues in his teaching.

They really defend the way they speak it. Someone like me comes along and they'll say, "Gaa-gimaazhii, giiken ekidayid." You're wrong, you don't know what you're saying, you speak it wrong." So you know, those kinds of things happen too. People from certain communities where there are still speakers really are staunch defenders of their dialects... So that's why I tell my students, "When you go home, listen to the way they speak it, if they still speak it, then say it the way they say it there." But you know, they forget and they come back and say, "They told me I was speaking wrong."

So there's people like that, you know, like to put people down I guess. We get a lot of that. I get a lot of that, but I'm used to it now so it doesn't bother me. People tell me the way I speak is not right. And I also get flak for teaching it the way I do, writing it out. People say, "You shouldn't teach it that way. Then there's people that give me flak because some of those stories are what we call the legends or cultural stories. "You shouldn't teach those things." Because my classes are mixed, not all Anishinaabe people, not all Indian people. There's some, what I call Euro-descendants (laughter). There's some Canadians, regular Canadians in the classes too. So then there's people that get mad at me, or at least chastise me, "You shouldn't teach cultural things in your classes." So no matter what I

²⁷⁷ Blackfeet language activist Darrell Kipp ascribes negative attitudes that arise in language revitalization work to the persistence of what he calls "Boarding School syndrome behaviours." To counter them, the Piegan Institute 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." Darrell R. Kipp, *Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned*, 37.

*do, I don't win.*²⁷⁸

Webkamigad's acceptance of others' criticism seems to be a widely shared trait of AR activists. Barb Nolan explained how she coped with negative attacks that many teachers sustain in their work.

*Sometimes we have individuals who have a lot of negativity, wherever it's coming from. As speakers or as individuals who are trying to motivate others into acquiring the language, we have to sort of not listen to the negatives and the negativity people because they must be going through something on their own to make them the way they are. We just have to continue what we are doing and hopefully people will start to see that it's coming along and being successful.*²⁷⁹

Support from other language teachers is crucial to sustain spirits that are already facing enormous challenges besides frequent attacks from other Anishinaabeg. Unifying people to support AR is fundamental for its long-term viability and for restoring intergenerational transmission in Anishinaabe communities. Webkamigad remains an optimist.

*I think communities have to really come together. The communities have to really make an effort. Even the communities where they don't have any speakers left, they have to come together and try to reclaim the language somehow. It might not be their dialect, it might have to be somebody else's dialect, but so as long as they learn the language, as long as they know the language, I think it can be done. It's going to be a lot of work, a lot of effort.*²⁸⁰

There is an important balance when it comes to the issue of dialectical variation in Anishinaabe-aki. Most teachers respect regional variations in the language and encourage the maintenance of that diversity. Webkamigad, for example, instructs his students to pay close attention, when they go home, to how people speak.

²⁷⁸ Webkamigad, interview.

²⁷⁹ Nolan, interview.

²⁸⁰ Webkamigad, interview.

It's getting more difficult now because most communities have very few speakers left, most communities, some communities don't even have a speaker. And then there are communities, and then an interesting thing happens too, like when they come into class, first year, I always tell them, "When you go home, remember they probably say it differently in your community. Because each community has sort of, you know, little differences." I tell them, "What you learn here is not the way most of them will say it back home where you're from." Say there's eight communities represented in my class at least, say there's at least eight communities. And each community has a slightly different way of saying things, so I tell them that, "What you learn here is not going to be the way they say it most of the time."²⁸¹

Negative feedback from family and community members can obviously be a source of discouragement for learners and teachers do their best to prepare their students for criticism. Other ASL teachers shared Webkamigad's concern of how damaging dialectal disputes can be for AR morale. Pat Ningewance Nadeau described how she urged her students to learn other dialects while still encouraging them to learn their own.

Another thing that has been an obstacle I think is the idea of dialect or being from Ontario. I used to sometimes be challenged by a student when teaching, "You are from Ontario or you speak a different dialect." I would always point out that, "I could speak to your parents probably." And a lot of them, I did know their parents, and would have long conversations with their parents in my language. Communication was never an issue, understanding. And the fact that a person is from Ontario or from Saskatchewan shouldn't matter because we did not put those boundaries there. In the old days people traveled all over and learned each other's dialects. The more you learned about the way other people spoke added to your worth as a good communicator."²⁸²

Other fluent speakers who have taught throughout Anishinaabe-aki support Ningewance Nadeau's point about the mutual intelligibility of most dialects. Barb Nolan recalled traveling two thousand kilometers south from her community in Ontario to Kansas in order to teach Anishinaabemowin as a second language.

²⁸¹ Webkamigad, interview.

²⁸² Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

She was introduced to the last fluent speaker of their language and described the experience.

I had a chance to work in Kansas on the Potawatomi reservation there with language. There was an elderly lady that spoke pure Potawatomi. In this area around Manitoulin and along the north shore, there is no pure Ojibwe, there is no pure Odawa, there is no pure Potawatomi. These three tribes all understood each other. The tone might have been a little different. The intonation might have been a little different. There might be a difference in some words, but that would be the only thing that is different. They can understand. They can carry on a conversation even with the differences. Even with the differences they can carry on a conversation perfectly. This lady in Kansas spoke Potawatomi and I was very apprehensive at first when I went down there. "I wonder if I'm going to understand her?" I was quite anxious to meet her. She's got to be in her late 80s and she's the only speaker left there now. When I met her, she was kind of shy, too, because she's meeting this girl from up north. Some of the language is exactly the same. Exactly the same! Other parts of the language I had a hard time to understand. I'd ask her to tell me in a different way, but other parts are exactly the same. No difference. I think we have to overcome those obstacles when we say, "She's Odawa," or, "She's Ojibwe," or, "She's Potawatomi." These three languages, I believe, all understand one another and they all converse among one another without any problem.²⁸³

Both Ningewance Nadeau and Nolan have had the opportunity to travel across Anishinaabe-aki, and both are certain that dialect must never be an obstacle for AR. Nolan stressed the urgency of AR work and dismissed dialectical concerns as a distraction from the larger issue of creating new generations of speakers.

We cannot be busy fooling around with dialect. There's no time. Where a community has lost its language and there's no dialect, you have to acquire the dialect of someone else that is maybe close from there. [A dialect dispute] only sets up roadblocks. I think all Anishinaabe people understand each other. Anishinaabe speakers are Ojibwe, Odawa, or Potawatomi.²⁸⁴

Because so many AR activists work outside their home communities many seek out local support for their work in order to avoid such dialectical disputes.

²⁸³ Nolan, interview.

²⁸⁴ Nolan, interview.

Maya Chacaby works in Toronto where surrounding communities speak an eastern dialect of Anishinaabemowin that is distinct from her own community's dialect near Thunder Bay. Chacaby and her colleagues in the Ciimaan language initiative at the University of Toronto created their Ojibwe Speed-Dating phrasebooks in central, eastern, and western dialects to promote and support dialectical variation. Chacaby described how she creates commitment between herself and others to create and maintain accountability to other Anishinaabemowin activists and teachers.

*I expect you and I will become fluent speakers. Yeah, in ten years' time I will be expecting that from you and I want you to expect that from me. So we are like brother and sister in this journey together and we will find more brothers and sisters.*²⁸⁵

Indeed, many ASL workers rely on each other for encouragement and guidance to available resources. Many who are active in AR do so in supportive roles rather than teaching. Lorena Fontaine is a professor in Aboriginal Governance who is drawing upon her undergraduate and graduate law degrees for her doctoral research on Indigenous languages. She was concerned that Indigenous languages were not protected in the Canadian constitution. She understood that Indigenous communities had their own laws and protocols for protecting their linguistic heritage and wanted to find ways to have them recognized in Canadian law.

I felt that I had all this legal training and that I wanted to do something with language... I am doing my PhD on Aboriginal language rights right now. So I feel that I am not really promoting it publicly in a sense that I am doing public work. I am doing research with a PhD supervisor on the law around Aboriginal languages, but my hope is that once I am completed the research that I will talk about it publicly and I will hopefully publish papers

²⁸⁵ Chacaby, interview.

along the way so that people will know that there are laws in Canada that potentially recognize language rights for Aboriginal people. So my work is primarily academic right now, but as I am doing the work I am talking about language issues with my family and with people in the community so I feel that just by engaging in conversation with people in my family and people in the community it's another kind of work. They don't think that there are a lot of people talking about language enough, meaning that we have been harmed. I feel that is semi-public work and also healing work, too, around languages.²⁸⁶

Isadore Toulouse also spoke of Indigenous responsibilities to inform each other and Canadians about the importance of Indigenous languages in order to draw attention to language loss.

We as the speakers of the language, caregivers of the language, caretakers of the language, do our best to teach, educate, train, facilitate programs to bring the language back. But I think there needs to be a bigger voice to say, "Hey, we're losing our languages, we need to do something about it." The leaders of this country, our First Nation leaders need to say, "Our language is the official language of this territory," be it Ojibwe, be it Cree, be it Onkwewenna, the Iroquoian languages. Those are important things that First Nation communities, the First Nation people that live in the communities, need to see. "Hey my language is important." Why aren't our leaders doing anything about it? I think we need to have billboards across Canada that say, "This is a First Nation territory" in the language. I worked for the past 27 years, working with language revitalization, and it's only last year we've managed to get billboards put up on highways in Northern Ontario. We have three billboards that talk about the language conference with a little slogan on the bottom, "Nishnaabatoon-pane-gibinoojiinyag," it says, "Always speak your language to your children." A small little slogan that says the importance of language, and it advertises the language conference, and we fundraised hard to put these billboards up.²⁸⁷

Mary Young has observed increasing interest in Indigenous languages among academics, but advocated that more be done to raise awareness among youth of languages importance.

When I've attended Anishinaabemowin Teg, I used to think about my community, especially the young people. I wonder how they would feel if

²⁸⁶ Fontaine, interview.

²⁸⁷ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

*they sat in these sessions and the sessions are actually done in Anishinaabemowin. We do too many things in isolation. We don't always give the young people an opportunity to see the good work that Anishinaabemowin Teg has done over the years. The Maori people do it, they do it in the cities, they do it in rural areas. We haven't quite done that.*²⁸⁸

Many participants acknowledged progress in raising awareness around the importance of Anishinaabemowin. Darrell Boissoneau is the president of Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig and is optimistic that Anishinaabemowin will be revived and that its reemergence has the potential to transform relations between Anishinaabeg and Canadians.

*People recognize the importance of our language. There has been a great effort by all of us to try to learn to speak. It has been happening for quite some time. In our chief and council forums, for example, we see the language spoken a lot more. From the simple opening of a prayer, saying 'thank you' or some type of acknowledgement. Twenty years prior to that, you would never have heard that. In our tribal councils as well, encouraging people to speak the language is also happening. The Union of Ontario Indians recently adopted a resolution. Rather than we being referred to as Aboriginal, we're going to refer to ourselves as Anishinaabeg again. This is the right thing to do. All this links up to wherever our people are, whether they are on reserve or at the friendship centres or at institutions such as Algoma University or Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig. We need to ensure that the language is retained and is spoken. We want to encourage all people to learn it. Not only our people, but all people who are interested in learning the language. I think, again, this will bridge this gap that creates this conflict and differences between us. Once we have this greater understanding of one another, our relationships will improve immensely.*²⁸⁹

Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig can be translated into English as Shingwauk "School," "Learning Lodge," or "University." Consciousness-raising about the importance of Anishinaabemowin includes naming our institutions and organizations in Anishinaabemowin. Renaming our contemporary world in

²⁸⁸ Young, interview.

²⁸⁹ Boissoneau, interview.

Anishinaabemowin is an important part of showing its continued importance for contemporary Anishinaabeg. Mary Young described how she selected the name for the Aboriginal centre where I work at the University of Winnipeg. She chose the name “Wiichiiwaakinaak” because it refers to the partnership she saw developing between Aboriginal people and the U of W. The term had special significance for Young because she remembered her parents using the Anishinaabe term, “nwiichiiwaagan” or “partner” in English, with one another as a term of endearment. She also describes the resistance she faced to using Anishinaabemowin rather than English to name the new centre.

I will start with this one story and it comes from Anishinaabe organizations beginning to name their place of work in Anishinaabemowin. I was very thrilled... I was asked to name the centre - Wiichiiwaakanak - and it took me four days and four nights probably to come up with the name because I wanted it to be special. I thought it was an historic moment because the University of Winnipeg was finally working with an Aboriginal organization, Shawano Wapunong, which is South East. The only way I could come up with the name was that I saw the memorandum of understanding as a partnership. And so I remembered as a little girl and even as an adult, my father would call my mother “nwiichiiwaagan.” And my mother would call him “nwiichiiwaagan.” And so because it was two organizations, that's how I came up with the name Wiichiiwaakanak.

I was proud of it because I needed to process what that word meant, and it had to fit with U of W and South East. And then I went to some kind of important meeting on-campus and somebody from the Board of Regents said, “Well, why don't we just call it 'partners'?” I said, “No. I will teach you this afternoon how to pronounce Wiichiiwaakanak,” I said, “it's not that difficult.” But again some people, some staff started to shorten it to “Wiichii” but I said no, that's not the name. So, for me, if we want to encourage the use of Anishinaabemowin we have to be diligent and make sure those words don't get shortened. We're taking away the meaning of what we're trying to do. And I think it encourages young people to be proud of their language and not be ashamed of it - because that's what we are fighting against now. Our parents, not my parents, but parents who went to residential schools, were so ashamed of who they were, why would they pass it on to their children? So that's what we need to

*revitalize. It's not just the language, but who we are as Anishinaabe people; how we see ourselves fitting in society.*²⁹⁰

Nelson Toulouse agreed that Anishinaabeg must raise the language's profile and visibility.

*There's some really practical things that can be done. If we begin to incorporate language into everyday things, the way we conduct our meetings would be a good example for leadership. You can incorporate language into the way we conduct our business and that's one way of beginning to convince the leadership that language is important and something that's not strange. We begin that process little by little and it becomes a normal thing to do. I noticed that communities introduce change or signage in Anishinaabemowin and that's a positive thing. I think we shouldn't make any apologies or excuses for our language. If our Anishinaabe names are in Anishinaabe then they ought to remain Anishinaabe. Don't anglicize it.*²⁹¹

Value Anishinaabemowin And Its Learners, Speakers, and Teachers

To change perceptions of Anishinaabemowin, it is also important to celebrate successes and acknowledge those who are actively pursuing AR. Restoring pride in Anishinaabemowin can take subtle forms that operate at an almost sub-conscious level. For example, language teachers frequently expressed disappointment with the tacit messages sent to learners when the materials produced for AR work are of lesser quality than those for other subjects. Ningewance Nadeau began publishing in part to counter this disrespectful treatment of Anishinaabemowin learning resources.

And about perception of the language, in my travels, I have seen books that were written for language teaching, and over and over again, and I know you'll agree me, you see books with spiral binding or they are just photocopies and then bound together. And it's usually beige, the cover is beige and there is no thought taken to making the books attractive. They are always the same 8.5" by 11" – just photocopied basically. How are

²⁹⁰ Young, interview.

²⁹¹ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

*children supposed to be proud of their language if that's all they get? So that is why I go a little extra to have shiny, colourful covers.*²⁹²

Ningewance Nadeau believed that the poor quality of ASL materials sends signals to students that Anishinaabemowin is less important than other subjects.

Isadore Toulouse identified the same subtle disregard for Anishinaabemowin when the funding available to create Indigenous language materials pales in comparison to those available for English and French.

*We need an active role. I mean the French language gets billions and billions of dollars from the government. The Native languages should get the same amount, even more... As teachers, we're always photocopying stuff from different material, we're always whiting stuff out because we don't have the glossy books for grade one, grade two, grade three, grade four, all the way to post-secondary to teach the language. And I think that's what the kids need to see to be able to understand, "Hey my language is important." Right now they're thinking, "Oh, my language isn't important, all the teacher has is photocopied material."*²⁹³

Isadore Toulouse raised a frequent criticism among research participants regarding Canada's official languages policy that only recognizes English and French, but not Indigenous languages. Participants recognized this disparity in how Indigenous languages are treated and are pointing out this inequity in order to lobby for increased government funding.

Lorena Fontaine believed that this discrepancy needs to be rectified to acknowledge Indigenous languages as official languages as well.²⁹⁴

²⁹² Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²⁹³ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

²⁹⁴ Canadian senator Serge Joyal recently sponsored a private member's Bill S-237 "An Act for the advancement of the aboriginal languages of Canada and to recognize and respect aboriginal language rights" or, by its abbreviated title, the "Aboriginal Languages of Canada Act." Prospects for this bill becoming law are remote because it is extremely rare for opposition private members' bills to be adopted. Nonetheless, S-237 has generated a groundswell of support from Indigenous language activists who organized an online petition to call for its adoption and implementation. The bill would encourage

[W]hen you look at the language laws of this country they are based on this misleading notion that the two founding languages of Canada are French and English. There is never any mention of the 52 languages that existed long before the French and English languages ever arrived. I think that recognizing that Aboriginal languages are part of Canada's constitution would encourage people to engage in the language because they would no longer be considered second-rate languages, but are critically important to Canada's history and future. Nobody should feel ashamed about Aboriginal languages. They are an important part of Aboriginal people's cultural identity.²⁹⁵

Fontaine and many other participants believe that Canada must be held responsible for the harm it has caused to Indigenous peoples. Kathy Absolon hoped that Canada would follow New Zealand's recognition of the Maori language as an official language.

I think a really good model that's realistic for us is the Maori model, because in New Zealand, Maori is one of the official languages. When I said make changes at all levels, so institutionally and politically, I would make the indigenous languages an official language too. Canadian society ought to be becoming bicultural...so I would change, if I had all this power, I would change the policies around where that Indigenous language would become an official policy and then the resources would be there.

Unfortunately, it seems almost inconceivable, due to the Canadian government's past and present treatment of Indigenous peoples, that Canada would recognize Indigenous languages as official and equal to English and French. Canada's failure to provide substantive funding to support Indigenous languages reveals that the cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples continues to be its real, if unofficial, policy. Furthermore, the number of official languages would grow

official status of Aboriginal languages and their use for local education, governance, and media. The Senate of Canada, "Bill S-237 – An Act for the advancement of the aboriginal languages of Canada and to recognize and respect aboriginal language rights," The Senate of Canada, 2nd Session, 40th Parliament, 57-58 Elizabeth II, 2009, http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/Senate/Bills/402/public/S-237/S-237_1/S-237_text-e.htm (accessed August 30, 2009).

²⁹⁵ Fontaine, interview.

exponentially from the current two to anywhere between 37 and 60 (estimates vary) official Indigenous languages. Although the inequity is obvious, Canadians and their governments remain divided over funding two official languages, let alone several times that number.

Fortunately, Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous peoples do not need to wait for official recognition of their languages. Even with chronic underfunding, Anishinaabemowin's esteem can be raised in order to encourage Anishinaabeg to continue speaking and teaching the language. There are many ways that research participants are seeking to enhance Anishinaabemowin's esteem in the eyes of their fellow Anishinaabeg. Alan Corbiere identified highly motivated language learners who are involved in ceremonies as roles models.

So I think that the clock is ticking, but what I've seen is these people that get involved in the Three Fires Midewiwin Society, there's kind of a backlash on one hand that for some people they feel that it's just an organized religion. But on the other hand, what I see is a lot of people, they're sober, they're willing to work, go out and help their fellow Anishinaabe by being a firekeeper by splitting some wood, by going out and getting those rocks, by going and feeding ancestors. But not only that, they're learning those songs in Ojibwe that they have to learn to say in Ojibwe and then a number of them are actually seriously taking on the responsibility of learning to speak Ojibwe as well and they are actually, they're meeting with success... when I was talking about that missionary zeal, that's where that missionary zeal is evidencing itself, or showing itself, in the people who are actually committed to learn Anishinaabe traditions and the ceremonial life. They're the ones who are actually taking it upon on themselves and saying, "Well you know what, this is only going to survive if I take a stake in it and I claim my stake and my responsibility and stick with it."

So these people are the ones that are going to be, if you want to say, the last bastions after a while. They've really tried and a lot of them are urban too. There are some that live on reserves, but they go do their circuit of ceremonies for spring, summer, and fall and then anything in between, any kind of sweat that's necessary or get together for singing. They're there. So they're learning, those people are learning and to me that's

*what they call getting the whole basket, the whole thing in one shot. They're learning the ceremonies, they're learning the legends, they're learning the teachings and they're learning it all in Ojibwe. That's the whole package. That's what we are supposed to be trying to do.*²⁹⁶

Maya Chacaby has dedicated time to celebrating learners' achievements with a special graduation ceremony at the University of Toronto. More recently, she has also sought to highlight the efforts of ASL teachers. In 2008, she spent the summer traveling throughout Anishinaabe-aki in order to video Anishinaabeg who are working in AR. She hoped that showing these videos of AR role models to her students back at the University of Toronto might inspire them to continue learning Anishinaabemowin.

*These leaders, some of them were fluent from birth, some of them became fluent afterwards and are now teaching in the community, creating material, they're doing all kinds of wonderful things. If the students can see them and hear what they have to say and hear their words of advice, maybe they won't lose hope. Maybe they won't get so frustrated. Maybe they'll want to meet these people or approach these people in the future. That's my hope. So this summer I went to, mostly I went to the Lakehead, in Thunder Bay, they have the Native Language Instructors Program. I figured, they're all going to be there, instead of traveling around I can just hang out in Thunder Bay with my family, and so I did about 16 interviews. Some people only spoke Ojibwe, some people did one in Ojibwe and one in English, some did a mix of both. But every single one of them were just incredible role models. I think that what they have to say will really help the students so I will, in the class now...I will be showing the videos. One week it will be Isadore Toulouse, the next week it will be Pat [Ningewance Nadeau], and yeah! I'm hoping that because we're in the city and we're scattered, some of us are broken, you know, it's hard to have community. This way you are getting access to role models that you would normally get if you were in a community.*²⁹⁷

Chacaby's example was exceptional because she explicitly combined the need to celebrate AR successes in order to encourage ASL learners.

²⁹⁶ Corbiere, interview.

²⁹⁷ Chacaby, interview.

Another aspect of changing perceptions of Anishinaabemowin must include a reappraisal of all Anishinaabeg who still carry the language. Pat Ningewance Nadeau pointed out that she has seen many fluent Indigenous language speakers who are living in extreme poverty.

Back in Sioux Lookout, the town near my own reserve, there are street people who are homeless. Actually they must have a home in the bush, but I used to hear them speaking in the language – that’s their language. They are outsiders in that small town. They have a resource, they have a wealth, that should be used, that could be useful. They could work, but people just dismiss them as street people. Same with Kenora area you see that. A lot of these people they speak their language so beautifully, but for whatever reasons they left their communities to come to the city. That is one resource that they have. Here in Winnipeg that must be the case too.²⁹⁸

How many potential AR activists and teachers are missed as a result of our failure to value all Anishinaabemowin speakers? Ningewance Nadeau noted with sadness that so many fluent speakers of Indigenous language are ignored and unappreciated. Many Anishinaabeg who speak their language continue to be denigrated and devalued because they do not fit into “whitestream” society.²⁹⁹ In Chapter Two, many participants expressed a belief that Anishinaabemowin’s revitalization is an opportunity to heal and restore individuals, families, and communities. Valuing Anishinaabemowin also means re-valuing those who speak the language; its revitalization can therefore be understood as part of a larger process of returning to Anishinaabe values and a conscious rejection of whitestream values.

²⁹⁸ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

²⁹⁹ Claude Denis, *We Are Not You: First Nations and Canadian Modernity* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1997), 13. Denis adapts the term from feminism’s “malestream” and to illuminate how “Canadian society [is] principally structured on the basis of the European, ‘white,’ experience.”

Mobilize Anishinaabeg for AR

Mobilizing Anishinaabeg for revitalization is an ongoing challenge. Alan Corbiere was concerned with the widespread complacency among those who ostensibly believe Anishinaabemowin is important, but do nothing to maintain or support it.

Ask anyone on a reserve now. They say, "Language is important, yeah I want to learn to speak the language." But of those, I'd say 95, maybe even 99% have done nothing, maybe only went to one class voluntarily. But as for actually taking a lesson, or actually trying to record an Elder and actually trying to write it out, and actually trying to study it on their own, maybe I'm being too harsh, but I would say 95% actually haven't done anything about learning their language.³⁰⁰

Corbiere credited Joshua Fishman's book *Reversing Language Shift* for helping him conceptualize the problem. Fishman employs the term "ideological clarification" for the initial process of determining goals and analyzing the benefits and costs of any RLS initiative.³⁰¹ Prior ideological clarification is not an individual act, but a collective one whereby a community determines what its members are willing to sacrifice in order to achieve a common goal. Without clear goals and tasks related to achieving these goals, the result may be general support for language maintenance or revitalization paradoxically coupled with widespread indifference to doing anything about it.

They need that prior ideological clarification, otherwise, everyone jumps on and says, "Yes, we want language!" but they've voted for a concept, and not everyone is rolling up their sleeves and participating. So it's like, "Yes, we want language, but you do it. You do it Brock. But we're not going to give you any money for it." That's what it comes down to. You poll anybody here on this reserve probably 80-90% say, "Yes language is important. Yes I want to learn my language." But then, what are you willing to do for it? That's when it just drops... this video is on, and sometimes I am wondering if I should say different things like this, but I'm

³⁰⁰ Corbiere, interview.

³⁰¹ Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, 394-395.

not lying. If this weren't the case, we wouldn't be sitting here. If people were speaking Ojibwe here on the reserve and all voting for the concept and getting on board and actually working towards it, we wouldn't even be sitting here having this kind of conversation because it would be unnecessary. We would already be learning to speak the language, or we would already be speaking the language. All we would be worried about is how to coin new words for new things, new concepts and new implements that face us in a modern world. That's what we would be doing rather than talking about how we are going to save our language. So your program has to find out who is actually going to do what and what they're willing to do for it.³⁰²

Language planning is a challenging task even at the local community level. The following section explores how Anishinaabeg are organizing collectively between communities to create alliances and networks for revitalizing Anishinaabemowin.

Build Alliances and Communities of Interest

Many participants emphasized the importance of coordinating AR efforts.

Indigenous language revitalization initiatives first appeared in North America in the 1970s.³⁰³ There have been many attempts to coordinate efforts, but one of the largest in scale was the 1996 international conference to standardize Anishinaabemowin orthography. Ningewance Nadeau was the main organizer of the conference and describes the endeavour.

In 1995 I was hired to organize and hold a national – it wasn't just national it was international because a lot of our delegates came from the United States – to hold an orthography conference to try to find a common orthography that we could all use across the borders. They call themselves Anishinaabeg, their language is Anishinaabemowin, but in English it's Algonquin. Of course Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. I even invited people from one community in Alberta, O'Chiese, anishinaabemowak. I invited people from Michigan, Wisconsin, but not North Dakota. There's one community there, but I had trouble contacting them. It was a wonderful conference once it began. We talked about how similar we all are despite the fact we were spread out across the country

³⁰² Corbiere, interview.

³⁰³ Reyhner, *Contemporary Native American*, 65-66.

and into the United States. We talked about the customs we hold in common and how we feel about the language and how despite all the dialects we could still communicate with each other. We could still talk to each other. It just takes a little tweaking of your ear to understand someone from Saskatchewan or someone from Quebec or Michigan.

I hosted the conference too and that was very special for me. In the end we recognized that we would use three writing systems, that's the macron that they use in Saskatchewan, and another macron system that they used in Quebec, but they're also influenced by French orthography and we recognized in central Canada and the States that we use the double-vowel system. It's the most widely used one. Lakehead University has been a leader in promoting that system.³⁰⁴

Developing a standard orthography was a crucial step toward coordinating language initiatives among teachers. Prior to this conference, the lack of a standardized writing system caused confusion and frustrated cooperative efforts among teachers or the sharing of language resources. The double-vowel system has not been universally accepted as some AR activists, including two interviewed for this project, continue to defy convention by insisting on their own orthographies when spelling Anishinaabe words.

Nelson Toulouse agreed with Ningewance Nadeau that too many AR contributors work in isolation and obscurity. Nelson Toulouse retired from Anishinaabe politics to focus specifically on how Indigenous communities in Ontario can be better organized for language maintenance and revitalization. The organization he co-founded and currently leads, Anishinaabe-Mushkegowuk-Onkwehonwe Language Commission, has a mandate from the Chiefs of Ontario to coordinate this work.

There's all kinds of attempts, usually by small groups, small individuals all over Anishinaabe country to do something. There's a lot of good practices out there, but what we don't do very well is we don't network very well. So

³⁰⁴ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

a lot of good things that we do we generally don't know about until we meet, we network or we happen to stumble upon something somebody else is doing. So we need to centralize or at least maybe coordinate all those efforts and so we can help each other. For the most part we certainly don't want to duplicate things or replicate things. I mean, if we do it collaboratively, then we'll save money, because resourcing is definitely lacking so we need to plan things much better. This current work I'm doing is, basically, that's my life vocation. I sleep good at night knowing I'm doing something useful (laughter).³⁰⁵

The AMO is still in its own development phase and is gathering an inventory of available resources. Toulouse alluded to this limitation on the AMO language commission's ability to support Indigenous language revitalization initiatives in Ontario.

Right now we lend support as best we can. There's no formal agreements or relationships. We're basically out there telling people who we are and telling them hopefully not too far down the road when it comes to the language curriculum development that we would be a body that they could actually approach for resourcing. Also we're developing a library of resources so that's hopefully what their relationship will be. I think in terms of our own strategic plan, which fits in with a national level strategy, is revitalization, as we see it, has to start from the very young. So we promote those things. We promote immersion as a way that actually works. It might not be the only way, but definitely that works. So we promote those things. If we need to engage experts on our review of a federal document that comes out we usually try and get people and communities that are developing immersion programs. So that's where our sort of expertise comes from... We have a website where we are soliciting volunteers, experts, so hopefully we can have a list with various people, contacts, consultants that communities can contact if they want to do work. We can also connect people so we want to be fairly practical, but we also want to be able to provide real resources, real funding.³⁰⁶

A major challenge to any language revitalization initiative is the lack of adequate financial resources. This is a recurring theme in language revitalization work as the costs can be substantial. Research participants were clearly upset by the

³⁰⁵ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

³⁰⁶ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

stark contrast in funding for English and French, Canada's two official languages, versus Indigenous languages.

When I hear or read about the billions that they get to keep their language, to broadcast in their language, how many stations do they have? And to make sure that the few French in a large area can keep their language – the expense! Everything you see in the grocery store it is all translated into French. It has provided a huge industry for French people to keep their language. Seeing all of that does help them to keep their language just to see it everywhere side-by-side in English. Cans, in the grocery store. A package of cigarettes even. And then the small amount we get through the Aboriginal Languages Initiative program which is such a shameful amount for the separate languages that we have in Canada. It is so shameful. Then there is the Michif people who have their hybrid language which they have every right to maintain as well because that is their identity. But I sometimes wonder why can't some of their funding come from the French language envelope or whatever you call it so that could free up more money for just the Aboriginal languages. We need a lot of effort into promotion to have children proud of our language – not just the children, but the parents ourselves. We need them to perceive their language as something that is valuable.³⁰⁷

Canada's annual support of \$5 million for all Aboriginal languages is indicative of its betrayal of responsibility for the original languages of this country when compared with the recent annual increase of \$150 million for Canada's two "official" languages of English and French. This increase comes on top of their existing billion dollar budgets.³⁰⁸ The chronic underfunding also has unfortunate side effects for Indigenous language work on the ground. Ningewance Nadeau blamed the chronic lack of funding for Indigenous language initiatives for generating competition and jealousy at the expense of AR cooperation.

³⁰⁷ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

³⁰⁸ Marion Menard and Marie-Eve Hudon, "The Official Languages in Canada: Federal Policy," *Publications List - Library of Parliament - Parliamentary Information and Research Service*, April 27, 2007, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/938-e.htm#3support> (accessed June 26, 2009).

I mentioned earlier that there is a lack of cooperation between people who are involved with different language programs. But I would emphasize that, I guess, there are personalities, certain personalities, that will not work together and that really is detrimental to language. We can't progress that way. There are people jealous of each other's programs I guess. People compete for what little money is being given out. Who is going to get the program? Who is going to get the funding?³⁰⁹

Despite the discrepancy between official and Indigenous language funding, many Anishinaabeg are finding creative and cost-effective ways of coordinating and organizing AR efforts.

Some participants hope that new communication technologies might make coordination and cooperation easier. Many of these technologies are relatively affordable and can reduce travel costs when coordinating efforts over large geographical areas. Maya Chacaby studies and works in Toronto, but is learning the dialect spoken in her home community close to Thunder Bay.

Because I am working with the northern Anishinaabemowin, like Severn-Ojibwe and here in Sioux Lookout and Lac Seul, I was hoping to start some kind of alliance of language teachers, activists and linguists, and organizations that work in the north with the language and have a way to share that knowledge. There is incredible technology that we are not using - like video-conferencing is a wonderful way to bridge the distance.³¹⁰

In other instances, particularly in urban areas, distance may be less of an obstacle. This expands the potential for another model of coordinating AR work: creating communities of interest. Chacaby felt the need for an Anishinaabemowin community when she started attending university. She was concerned that language students were limiting themselves to classroom instruction and were studying in isolation, "So in the classroom setting I noticed

³⁰⁹ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

³¹⁰ Chacaby, interview.

that a lot of students weren't, and maybe it's a university thing, but a lot of students don't talk to one another. So we're all sitting around working from the book speaking the language, but we're not speaking to one another."³¹¹

Chacaby decided to organize the ASL students to create a supportive social network at the University of Toronto.

The very first thing I committed myself to was the language programs. But for me, because I needed the language so bad to do my own healing and my own living and to have a good healthy life, I needed that language so bad that the classroom wasn't enough. And, you know, we have amazing teachers and lots of good books to work from, but I needed more than that. Especially in the city where you don't have regular conversations around you in Ojibwe. One of the things that I was able to do, because there was so much support in the school for me, was to start social groups and so I run these monthly social groups now for all the students, and visitors, and community members to come and try out the language. For those who already know a little bit, they can practice with people and if they want to learn more they can practice a few extra phrases. So we do once-a-month socials in Toronto through the University of Toronto at First Nations House and we work in partnership with the Native Canadian Centre program there. That's a big part. But developing those materials was difficult and also having enough students who were as committed as I wanted to be, that was also difficult...

Every year it just grows and becomes more successful, at least the way I see it. And it seems now that there's a good, small, but good language speaking learning community now. And that's what I want to create, is more community-building, so that we're not just teaching students a few words, that they get to go home and have a few words. We're creating enough interest in the language that the students stick to it for many, many years. And they have a reason to stick to it because people are there that they are responsible for. So part of how I see the program happening is in a cycle: the advanced or the intermediate students then take on leadership roles and they run the theatre project for the beginner students, or they run the socials for the beginner students so they have an important role in speaking the language and in teaching the language and in encouraging other speakers. So I can step away and let them have that.³¹²

³¹¹ Chacaby, interview.

³¹² Chacaby, interview.

Chacaby established her community of interest around Anishinaabemowin for the specific purpose of building an AR movement at the University of Toronto. For this study, I initially intended to focus specifically on the issue of AR in urban settings, but this original distinction between urban and reserve-based AR took on less significance as the research progressed. Many participants felt AR was necessary throughout Anishinaabe-aki and that such a reserve-urban distinction was artificial and unnecessary. For example, Alan Corbiere lives and works on his reserve of M'Chigeeng on Manitoulin Island, but has also lived, studied and worked for many years in Toronto. He described the challenges he foresaw for an urban language community while living in Toronto and then compared them to the challenges facing any Anishinaabe community.

I kept thinking to myself that there's no reason that we can't have an Anishinaabe speaking community here because there's a Chinatown, a Little Italy, you name it there. But the thing with the Anishinaabeg, the challenges, the socio-economic status, they don't actually have a place of their own, other than the projects, subsidized housing and businesses. So they just have subsidized housing, but with subsidized housing, sometimes it's not all Anishinaabeg, and even if it is all Anishinaabeg [also an inclusive term used for all Indigenous peoples], you get somebody that's a Cree from up north, or a Mohawk from elsewhere. So you don't necessarily have, you may have all Anishinaabeg, like different nations of Anishinaabeg, but you don't have Ojibwe Anishinaabe or Odawa Anishinaabe that speak it, you have Cree, Algonquins, Mohawks, all these Naadwek, other people there that don't speak Ojibwe or Odawa.³¹³

There is also potential to create physical spaces for Anishinaabeg to co-exist even in Canada's largest city. Alan Corbiere was inspired by the work of groups trying to protect and restore local natural ecosystems in the Greater Toronto Area while completing his graduate work in Environmental Studies at York University.

³¹³ Corbiere, interview.

An Anishinaabe can actually come along and still have an Anishinaabe sense of place based on what these guys are also doing, recovering the wild in the city. And there's no shortage of Esbanak and zhigaagoog, there's no shortage of skunks and raccoons in the city, squirrels and foxes. I've even seen some foxes, some people have seen deer on the outskirts and of course hawks, there's a lot of hawks, even the peregrine falcons and different types of birds. So you can do a lot in the city based on animals and birds as well. And we know it's such a crucial part of our identity because a lot of our names, our surnames, as well as our Anishinaabe names are based on animals, birds, fish, trees and plants...

The idea that kind of intrigued me, I don't know who said this or where I came across it, you can walk in any city and all along the cracks of the pavement where the grass starts to grow, and you can look at it as Anishinaabe life. They paved that all over, but that Anishinaabe life can still come through based on those cracks. Mind you, we're not going to take all those concrete out and make it all an Anishinaabe city, but it's finding those cracks and, they call it in ecology, corridors. They call it corridors where deer and other larger animals are able to pass their way through the cities, it's the same with the Anishinaabeg, that they would have these corridors and these pockets of where Anishinaabemowin can be the primary language or at least the secondary language and there can then be, I think, an increased self-determination and self-identity and self-construct for an Anishinaabe person living in an urban environment.³¹⁴

Corbiere's description of the challenge to aspiring Anishinaabemowin learners can be applied generally to any Anishinaabe communities where language shift to English is already underway. As language erosion is occurring both on and off-reserve, the AR challenge remains how to reverse this process. The following section reveals research participants thoughts on how other Anishinaabeg can be more effectively recruited to learn Anishinaabemowin.

Invite, Motivate, and Support ASL Learners

Learning another language can be daunting for a beginner. Compared to second language learning opportunities for European languages, there is relatively little available to learn Anishinaabemowin or any other Indigenous language in

³¹⁴ Corbiere, interview.

Canada. Even in cases where learners are able to find a course or language resource, these adult learners must have the necessary resources to participate: effort, time, and often money.

Research participants repeatedly cited funding as a major obstacle to developing effective and large-scale ASL programs. The issue of funding has been a recurring theme throughout this dissertation and will be discussed further in the following chapter, but for now, it is important to recognize that funding is an obstacle for many Anishinaabeg seeking to learn their ancestral language. A particular challenge for many existing ASL programs is that student tuition must cover costs before colleges and universities will be willing to host them. Such programs have to consequently dedicate substantial energy, money, and time to drum up interest in learning ASL. Sault College's Anishinaabe Immersion Certificate (AIC) program is one such example. Melvin Peltier pitches the opportunity to learn about Anishinaabe identity while gaining post-secondary credits.

I also talk to the kids out there in high school and I also go to events... when they're indecisive in what they want, I usually try and say, "Why don't you take the language program as your stepping stone towards going to whatever post-secondary career choice you want to get into? Because the program itself, although it's here at the college, it encompasses a lot about who you are. You get to know who you are as a Native person living in an urban environment."³¹⁵

An additional challenge is that many potential ASL recruits have never learned, or have had a bad experience attempting to learn, a second language. They may be intimidated by any language-learning, and may therefore struggle with learning ASL or invent excuses to withdraw.

³¹⁵ Peltier, interview.

Most languages are difficult to learn because maybe something inside tells us, "Nah, I don't want to learn, I don't need that." So maybe that's the same thing that's happening to our people, "Why do we need to learn our language? Why do we need to learn a language when we already speak?" If you're from Quebec, then most of them speak French or if you're from Ontario and the rest of Canada, most of them speak English. So that's probably what they might think... each individual person has to come up with a reason why or why they don't learn the language.³¹⁶

Alan Corbiere describes a common phenomenon in language courses where student attendance drops precipitously from start to finish.

This is what used to happen in Toronto when I'd go to these community language classes at the Native Friendship Centre or at the Toronto public school. You'd start out in September, and one year, I remember we went to Toronto public school, First Nation School, there must have been 70 people in that classroom. But by the time we got to October, eight classes later, or two months later, there'd be just ten of us again. And the majority were Zhaagnaashwak (white people). And the same thing would happen at the Native Canadian Centre. I'd sign up and there'd be 20 of us there and a good mix of Zhaagnaashwak and Anishinaabek there, but by the time you'd get towards Christmas... there's just ten of us sitting around.³¹⁷

Corbiere believed that part of the explanation for these high attrition rates relates to identity issues for Anishinaabeg learning Anishinaabemowin as a second language.

Sometimes I think part of the thing that used to give some of the Anishinaabeg grief was that the Zhaagnaashwak were better at picking it up and speaking it for some reason. I think it's just an emotional mental block in some cases that they are not able to pick it up... And I think that's what happens, a lot of Anishinaabeg don't start off right away trying to say what the words are because they don't want to make a mistake, they don't want to get laughed at. The Zhaagnaashwak don't have any problem with that because it's not really a part of their whole identity or self-concept. So to them, if they make a mistake saying something with their Ojibwe, no big deal, it's not who they are. But Anishinaabeg, they're trying to say something in Ojibwe and they muck it up, they get laughed at, then they may take it really personally that it's an attack on who they are as an Anishinaabe person. You're belittling them as an Anishinaabe person...

³¹⁶ Webkamigad, interview.

³¹⁷ Corbiere, interview.

*when you have this kind of a program in place, you need to factor that in.*³¹⁸

Many participants describe the connection that language has to identity and it is logical that negative experiences with language learning could be harmful.

Fontaine also recommended that support groups be made more readily available to those who are still overcoming specific historical traumas related to loss of language.

*I would also love to see sharing circles where Aboriginal people can go and talk about their feelings about speaking the language, such as shame, or why is it that we are having such a difficult time in passing the language on to the next generation. I realize a simple answer is that we don't have resources, but I think there are more fundamental feelings that need to be expressed. So I would love to see more opportunities for Aboriginal people to talk about language issues as part of language revitalization.*³¹⁹

As Corbiere and Fontaine explained above, sensitivity to historical trauma surrounding loss of language is a necessity. Many ASL teachers emphasize the importance of creating a safe and supportive learning environment for their students. Barb Nolan described the importance of providing a classroom environment that does not intimidate learners.

*I try and maintain an atmosphere of love, gentleness and kindness in my class. That has to be there. The student should not be afraid. The student must be happy and not scared to be put on the spot. So I don't put anybody on the spot. When I have a question after a story posed in the language to the students, anybody can answer. I don't say, 'John, can you tell me who jumped over the fence in my story?' Anybody is allowed to answer in any language. They can answer in English. They can speak to me in English. That's the main thing that I tell them when they first start. "You can speak to me in English, but I will not speak in English back to you."*³²⁰

³¹⁸ Corbiere, interview.

³¹⁹ Fontaine, interview.

³²⁰ Nolan, interview.

Many research participants emphasized that Anishinaabeg must take responsibility for learning their ancestral language. Mary Ann Naokwegijig-Corbiere acknowledged that determination, perseverance, and sacrifice will still be required of ASL students even in supportive learning environments.

*But of course speaking a language does not necessarily mean exclusively fun. There are challenges we have to talk about. There are times when people feel sad and angry and frustrated and you need to express yourself.*³²¹

During her interview, Chacaby also recalled seeing other ASL learners struggle with feelings of shame stemming from their inability to speak Anishinaabemowin.

*I mentioned this earlier, but a lot of the students who are my peers I see how much embarrassment and shame they have for not knowing the language. They're embarrassed. They feel terrible. There is all of this pressure for us to speak it. How come we don't speak it? Why aren't you learning? I see getting through that shame and embarrassment is really important in a whole range of activities in your life and you have to do that with the language first.*³²²

Chacaby directed an appeal to beginning ASL learners to be assertive and resilient in their own language journeys.

I would like to speak first to those people who are learning the language or thinking about it, at that beginner stage. I would just want to say that I am excited to see so many more people starting to take an interest in the language and I just want to tell people not to give up. Not to give up hope. It's hard, it's frustrating at times, but it's worth it. You might get to a stage where you have learned a whole list of words, you have a great vocabulary, but you don't know what to do with it. My suggestion to you is to build something. If you don't have a way to use it, create something that will allow you to use it. Don't just depend on what already exists. If you don't have what you need to speak the language, create a way to continue to do it – that's what I mean by don't give up. Do whatever it takes. Go to these week-long camps and harass fluent speakers. Get on Skype and find me or find Brock or find people and impose yourself on them. I know we are not an imposing kind of people (laughter), but this is

³²¹ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

³²² Chacaby, interview.

*the time that we do have to take a stand and ask for what we need. I would like to say that first to the learners.*³²³

Part of motivating learners is inspiring them to make sacrifices to achieve their goals. Isadore Toulouse described how he was inspired by his grandfather to work hard to achieve his goals. Today, he tries to instill in his students a similar spirit of ambition and responsibility.

So with the work with Anishinaabemowin, the language, I've always had my language. Pane ngii-anishinaabem, my parents, my grandparents, I was raised mostly by my grandparents, and they, my grandfather was part of the wars, he told me, "Isadore you have to do things for yourself, no one's going to do it for you. If you want to be successful in life, you have to get off your behind and make something of yourself." So I've always heard my grandfather saying these things and I think I owe a lot of my accomplishments today to what my grandparents taught me, to fend for myself, to be myself, to look after myself, and to enjoy life. So with the work on language, they've always also stipulated, "Don't ever forget who you are. Go and see the world, live outside the reservation, see the world, there's more to life out there." I've been living in Toronto for the past 27, 28 years and I have a 27-year-old son who speaks his language, understands his culture, is part of the ceremonial events of various powwows and activities. He is more of an Anishinaabe child than most children on the reservation.

*So those are the kinds of things that I instill on the students, the Anishinaabe students that I teach. To understand who they are, where they come from, and that their parents aren't going to do anything for them. Their parents will support them, but they can't continue to rely on them. They have to do it themselves, they have to make something of themselves to be able to live in the outside world, to see the outside world.*³²⁴

Absolon described how she sees her role as connecting Anishinaabeg wherever she lives to gather and speak Anishinaabemowin.

I started meeting other Ojibwe people who lived in Victoria, at the time when I was teaching at the University of Victoria, and I started saying, "You know, we have to learn our language, and I want to learn my language but I'd like to do it with other people." So I started a small group,

³²³ Chacaby, interview.

³²⁴ Isadore Toulouse, interview.

even at that time we were meeting at my house and we were listening to our Ojibwe on tape and we were using the Laurentian University Ojibwe 1 course manuals to learn that, so, and we didn't really have any language speakers with us, we just had the tapes so I'm pretty sure at that time we were learning Odawa, but that was okay because other Ojibwe dialects would say, "Just keep doing it you know, you'll pick it up, you'll keep picking it up." Even at that time in Victoria there was a small group of us, maybe 3 or 4 Ojibwe people who were also interested. We met at my house every week and we listened to the Ojibwe language introduction to Ojibwe language tapes. We did that for a while of course not being in the context, we didn't practice it enough, we didn't even know if we were saying it right, but we just kept doing it. So I got basics of sentence structure there.³²⁵

Absolon also wanted her children to learn Anishinaabemowin so, once they were old enough to attend school, she moved back to Ontario to ensure that their identity was rooted in Anishinaabe territory. She was able to make major progress by attending ceremonies and language courses at the local friendship centre. When she moved to Saskatchewan to accept a job at First Nations University, she started organizing once again.

So for me I just keep trying to do what I can, in my busy schedule, in my work, in my studies, and as a mother, as a community helper. I try to just keep doing the little pieces I can and I can't afford to just go somewhere for 3 months, or I would love to be able to do that. But logistically, it's difficult for me to be able to do that. So I just keep doing what I can do, so when I was at Parry Sound, I did the language Anishinaabemowin there. Like everywhere I've gone, I've created these little, because I want to do it, and I'm hoping that other people want to do it, and I feel it's not something we can do by ourselves.³²⁶

Absolon emphasized that revitalizing the language is a social process that draws Anishinaabeg together.

Revitalization of our Anishinaabemowin is something we have to do together. We have to struggle together to figure it out. We have to struggle together in our frustrations of not knowing it, in the pain and the misery of what we don't have, the celebration of what it feels like to get it,

³²⁵ Absolon, interview.

³²⁶ Absolon, interview.

and how happy it feels when I can say my introduction, or now I can say a full prayer, I can go all the way around the circle of life and I can say that whole prayer, now I can sing songs in Anishinaabe and I can say my vow to learn my language in Anishinaabe. So we have to have those celebrations together and to just keep encouraging each other. And I don't believe it's something I can do by myself. I have to do it with you, I have to do with others who have a similar experience of wanting to do that, who have a similar desire and a drive. Because you feed me when I see you doing your language. And it's like, it's something that I know you're out there and I know you're doing it and it supports me and encourages me to keep going today.³²⁷

Conclusion

This chapter and the two preceding chapters have provided an overview of the emerging AR movement that is currently developing across Anishinaabe-aki. Its recruitment and participation methods are a preoccupation for many of the movement's participants who spoke of revaluing Anishinaabemowin and mobilizing other Anishinaabeg to maintain and revitalize their language. I believe these two points, fostering both a sense of love and responsibility for Anishinaabemowin, are the necessary conditions for long term AR success.

The academic literature on social movements supports this finding. In their concluding chapter in *Methods of Social Movements Research*, authors Bert Klandermans, Suzanne Staggenborg, and Sidney Tarrow sum up the work in their field on social movement recruitment and participation. They identify three processes necessary to mobilize and sustain successful social movements: (1) "The generation of mobilization potential," (2) The Transformation of mobilization potential into actual participation," and (3) "Sustained participation and

³²⁷ Absolon, interview.

withdrawal from participation.”³²⁸ The emerging AR movement has clearly made substantial progress in the first two processes of generating mobilization potential and transforming that potential into action as shown in the current and preceding chapters. They presented four intertwined and mutually dependent strategies for realizing AR: Innovate ASL Teaching Methods; Develop AR Institutions, Programs and Resources; Value Anishinaabemowin; and Mobilize Anishinaabeg for AR.

Unfortunately, problems are already in evidence in the third category of sustained participation and withdrawal from participation. Many ASL teachers acknowledged that they have yet to have any of their students progress to the point of fluency in the language. Howard Webkamigad, Basil Johnston, and several others voiced their disappointments that Anishinaabeg ASL learners are failing to achieve fluency. In other words, ASL recruits are not sustaining their language learning and, in effect, withdrawing from participation.

It is not only ASL participants, but the programs themselves that are showing attrition. Since its launch, the Sault College Anishinaabemowin Immersion Certificate (AIC) saw declining enrolment in each successive year until only two students were registered for the 2006-2007 academic year. I was one of that year’s two lonely applicants and the AIC’s cancellation by Sault College was a significant setback for my own language progress, but, more importantly here, a cause for alarm that this unique program would generate such scant student interest. The AIC bounced back the following year and was

³²⁸ Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg, *Methods of Social Movement Research* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 325-326.

even expanded to its off-campus site at Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (KTEI) in M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island. However, enrolment again declined in both programs for 2008-2009. Once again, the Sault College AIC was cancelled in 2008-2009 and the KTEI AIC followed suit in 2009-2010. Both programs are in the process of shifting from full-time to part-time programs that are offered on weekends in an effort to increase enrolment. These sobering facts tell us that more needs to be done to sustain participation in the AR movement to accomplish its ultimate goal: the restoration of intergenerational transmission of Anishinaabemowin.

In the next chapter, research participants will discuss the political aspects of their work and how Anishinaabemowin revitalization relates to Indigenous Self-Determination. That discussion is followed by some final thoughts on this movement's potential for contributing to Anishinaabe resurgence as well as its implications for Indigenous Governance as a field of academic inquiry.

Chapter Five: Self-Determining Anishinaabemowin Revitalization

The interplay between language and politics has been a recurring theme throughout this study. Chapter One provided the historical context of how Canada apprehended Indigenous children in order to sever intergenerational transmission of their ancestral languages. Chapter Two explained the motivations of Anishinaabemowin Revitalization (AR) participants as they sought to restore that connection as an act of resistance against cultural genocide. Chapters Three and Four identified AR participants' specific revitalization methods and mobilization strategies. Thus far, I have framed AR objectives according to the movement's ultimate goal: restoring intergenerational transmission of the Anishinaabe language. Additional clarification is now appropriate to differentiate between external and internal objectives that will support the restoration of intergenerational transmission.

Social movement researchers often distinguish between movements “that focus on changing the external world and those that focus on changing their own members.”³²⁹ This distinction between external and internal movement objectives is analytically useful even though social movements generally incorporate aspects of both. For example, Native Studies scholar Andrea Smith writes that Indigenous movements must seek both to “make power” (internally) and “take power” (externally).

On one hand, it is necessary to engage in oppositional politics to corporate and state power by taking power. Yet if we only engage in the politics of taking power, we will have a tendency to replicate the

³²⁹ Randy Stoecker, *Research Methods for Community Change: A Project-Based Approach* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 117.

*hierarchical structures in our movements. So it is also important to “make power” by creating those structures that model the world we are trying to create. ... If we “make power” without trying to “take power,” we ultimately support the political status quo by failing to dismantle structures of oppression that will undermine us.*³³⁰

Cultural preservation is clearly a type of “inward-looking” movement.³³¹

Chapter Four focused on this AR movement’s “internal goals” as described by its participants who seek to “make power” by growing their movement. Participants described two strategies for movement mobilization: raising the profile of Anishinaabemowin and recruiting new Anishinaabeg to their cause. This chapter shifts from the AR movement’s internal objectives (within Anishinaabe communities), as profiled in the previous chapter, to external objectives (outside Anishinaabe communities). The relevant interview questions that were posed to participants can be summarized: “Are cultural and linguistic revitalization connected to broader Anishinaabe political projects seeking to ‘take power’ through self-determination and self-government?” Research participants explained how they relate their work to the broader political context in Canada and the connection between governance and language.

Is Anishinaabemowin Revitalization Political?

Many research participants were reluctant to characterize their work as political. They cited politics as a source of factionalism and negativity in many Indigenous communities. Barb Nolan, Melvin Peltier, Isadore Toulouse and Mary Young were all cautious about describing language work as political. Peltier stated that

³³⁰ Andrea Smith, *Conquest - Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 187.

³³¹ Stoecker, *Research Methods for Community Change*, 149.

“everybody has their own political views but politics itself, well it is what it is. I can't say more about that because I don't want to open up a can of worms on certain aspects of things, but you just have to learn how to play together, work together.”³³² Peltier avoided politics by staying focused on his language work because “there’s been talks about self-determination for years and years and years and, it will come someday, but meanwhile we still need our language to flourish. What we’re doing, the best we can, [is] to keep the political aspects of things out of the way we deliver our program.”³³³ Barb Nolan agreed that political conflicts can derail AR efforts.

*I think we have to try and stay out of politics. With a program or initiative for language revitalization, sometimes the political views are different or sometimes it's all about control or it's all about finances. ...[W]here the language is lost or almost lost, the community is in pain. ... So there might be a lot of dysfunctionality in that community.*³³⁴

Exasperation with politics or politicians is not unique to Indigenous people. However, it is intensified because the band council system is an alien imposition on Indigenous peoples that divides their communities and factionalizes families.

Wilfred Pelletier, Anishinaabe author and Elder from Wikwemikong, wrote about the arrival of the political era in Indigenous communities in 1973 and feared that it would later be considered “the saddest period in Indian history.”

*I think that is why a few of the people of my grandfather's generation, some of my father's generation, and many of my own generation became infatuated with organizations, with playing the organizational game. Became infatuated with the vertical structures of Western European economics and politics.*³³⁵

³³² Peltier, interview.

³³³ Peltier, interview.

³³⁴ Nolan, interview.

³³⁵ Wilfred Pelletier and Ted Poole, *No Foreign Land: The Biography of A North American Indian* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 146.

Pelletier criticized this widespread mimicry of whitestream business and government practices and their replication in band governance.

[C]hief and council are being isolated from the people because the old way of communication is now blocked. Another result is that the people who are elected to office - the chief and council – live in a kind of organizational dream world. Not having any realistic day-to-day contact with the people on the reserve any more, they really don't know what's going on. And they get more and more into running the reserve according to some kind of ideal pattern in their heads – which is not an Indian pattern, it's a white pattern – instead of on the basis of what the people are really thinking and feeling and what they really want.³³⁶

Pelletier held out hope because he saw youth rejecting politics. “When I talk with them, they say politics divides the people and creates minority groups. They tell me there is no such thing as majorities and minorities – there's only people.”³³⁷

This profound cynicism towards politics remains widespread in Indigenous communities and may explain the reluctance for AR activists to label their work as “political.” Young agreed with Peltier's trepidation in regards to politics but also thought it was possible to determine whether political involvement can be negative or positive.

I don't have trouble with the word “political” per se. The only time I find difficulty with it is again when I am at home, when I am in First Nations because all of a sudden that word “political” becomes negative. When you personalize it in a negative way, how can it be positive? I look at political in a very positive sense. Unless we have that political will how can we convince people that our language is important? That political will needs to be there.³³⁸

³³⁶ Pelletier and Poole, *No Foreign Land*, 147-148.

³³⁷ Pelletier and Poole, *No Foreign Land*, 149.

³³⁸ Young, interview.

One participant tried her best to avoid political involvement but eventually found that to be impossible. Maya Chacaby recalled how she had been forewarned, “language is political.”

When I started doing the socials and the theatre project I kept telling people: “Oh, I just want to do the social stuff. I don’t want to do any political anything. I don’t want to have anything to do with politics. I have had enough of it. I’ve done it.” And I kept hearing these very wise teachers saying, “But Maya, language is political.” And I didn’t know what they were talking about but, ho-waa! The things I have had to do to get the programs. I have to advocate on behalf of the language constantly. I have to fight for even just simple little things like having an honouring ceremony at the end of the year for all of the students who have gone through an Indigenous language – just recognizing the commitment that they made for one year. Having to fight to have that part of the program or having to fight to have people take these little things seriously because they count. That is, that has been, political. So I learned my lesson (laughter). Everything that we do to create language, Anishinaabemowin community, is political. It is an act of resistance. It is a part of decolonizing. It is a part of becoming who we are and all of those things, as Aboriginal people, are political.³³⁹

Lorena Fontaine also felt that Indigenous language revitalization is a political act that resists colonization. She saw the connection through her efforts to assist residential school survivors.

First off, I think that language is very political. A very stark example is when you look at what the government did to try and destroy our identity it took a direct attack on our language. I think the government knew that an integral part of our identity is being able to communicate in a different language so they tried to extinguish our language. From that standpoint language revitalization is very much a political act of self-determination in terms of trying to maintain a fundamental aspect of who we are.³⁴⁰

Kathy Absolon agreed that Indigenous language revitalization is political because it is an act of resistance against Canadian policies that were meant to eradicate Indigenous peoples.

³³⁹ Chacaby, interview.

³⁴⁰ Fontaine, interview.

Without a doubt. And some people wouldn't necessarily say that, but I do because our language was targeted politically, it was outlawed, it was made illegal. The kids, when they spoke it, were punished. It's very political...if we're doing something in our language, the dominant policy makers, because they don't know our language, they're threatened by it. ... Politically, we need to have our language back because there's power in our language as people and our language empowers us and I think that the government is threatened by that because they don't understand our language, they don't understand the way of life it's reflected in. But I think they should learn it. I think that they need to learn it, and there needs to be policies that make our country bicultural. So it is political.³⁴¹

Absolon emphasized that non-Indigenous peoples need to learn the languages and customs of the Indigenous people from that territory.³⁴²

Canadian society ought to be becoming bicultural. They ought to be able to say whatever [Indigenous] territory they're in; they ought to be able to do greetings and basic languages of the indigenous people who live in that territory. White Canadians or anybody, or immigrants, whoever, ought to know these things. And you know in the immigration policies, they don't have to know anything about Indigenous people. So we have thousands of immigrants coming from other countries, yet they know

³⁴¹ Absolon, interview.

³⁴² It was surprising that very few participants considered what role Canadians could play in AR. Another surprise was that there was virtually no discussion of how Anishinaabemowin might maintain a permeable communication barrier that excludes non-speakers. One justification for language maintenance that arose in the literature review but was not raised in the interviews was the language's potential to act as a shield against outsiders. This was almost completely absent from the participants' reasons for supporting AR with the sole exception of Shirley Williams' suggestion that Anishinaabemowin could help hockey players win games because opposition teams would not understand what the players were communicating to one another. Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle describe the covert value of Indigenous languages to maintain boundaries to protect Indigenous peoples from unwanted surveillance. "Although tribal peoples are hospitable, they also have an aspect of exclusivity, and language can help keep these important links alive and useful." Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle, *The Nations Within – The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 251. The security implications of revitalizing Indigenous languages have also been considered in an intriguing paper by Robert Lee Nichols. Nichols observes that Indigenous peoples can use language as a shield that excludes outsiders and as a wedge to create space for asserting control over education. However, Nichols did identify other benefits that frequently arose in the interviews such as increased prestige for the language as well as its community of speakers and a challenge to non-speakers to learn the language as well. Robert Lee Nichols, "'Struggling with Language' Indigenous Movements for Linguistic Security and the Politics of Local Community," *Ethnicities* (Sage) 6, no. 1 (2006): 33-36.

*nothing about the original people of the land, or even whose land they're moving to.*³⁴³

Absolon also challenged non-Indigenous people to advocate for Indigenous languages, and to lobby their governments.

*The larger society, white people, sometimes say, "What can I do to help? You know, "Push your governments, get the funding in, don't treat us like an anomaly, take us seriously." It's not just our life that's at stake, it's their life too. Because our language is connected to the land and the earth and, in our language, we hold the knowledge of how we're going to save the earth. How we're going to save creation rests in the knowledge of Indigenous peoples.*³⁴⁴

Although Absolon believed that the Canadian government, and Canadians generally, have an obligation to support Indigenous languages, she, like all of the research participants, is not waiting for Canada to act first. She has been organizing Anishinaabemowin language circles across the country. Her efforts testify to the commitment and determination of the emerging AR movement. The next section describes how AR participants are already "self-determining" the revitalization of Anishinaabemowin.

Ending Complacency and Self-Determining Revitalization

Research participants have emphasized the urgency of reversing this language shift to English at the expense of Anishinaabemowin. Ningewance Nadeau was dismayed by the results of a survey she conducted on fluency rates in northwestern Ontario.

I have done community assessment projects in areas north of Sioux Lookout and sent field researchers travelling to do door-to-door research. I had always thought that those communities were very strong in the

³⁴³ Absolon, interview.

³⁴⁴ Absolon, interview.

*language but because we have TV coming in, and other factors, we are losing the languages really rapidly. That's what the research showed.*³⁴⁵

Osawamick noticed a similar decline on her reserve of Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island when she took her students there from Peterborough for a fieldtrip.

*I found that speaking with them, thinking that they are on the reserve Wiky being very fluent, I found that the kids in the public school there, they were just the same place where my students are. It seemed like my students even knew more than the reserve children... I know that there needs to be a lot of work too on the reserve with the language because I would ask them certain basic questions that I would ask my children, and they didn't even know what I was talking about so I was quite shocked.*³⁴⁶

Ningewance Nadeau also regretted that efforts to restore Anishinaabemowin have come so slowly.

It really should have been done at the beginning of contact, you know like 50 years ago, when Native people still had the language spoken in the community where white people or non-speakers came into the communities and needed to understand the people. We should have had phrasebooks then so that outsiders would learn the language instead of the communities switching to English in order to communicate. That should have been the situation.

*Now we have Elders struggling to speak English so they can communicate with their grandchildren. That's not self-government.*³⁴⁷

Her powerful statement reminds us that Anishinaabeg are losing control over a crucial aspect of themselves. How can Anishinaabeg restore this fundamental aspect of intergenerational communication between a grandparent and her grandchildren? Barb Nolan stated that the fate of the language rests with the communities themselves. "I think it has to come from the community

³⁴⁵ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

³⁴⁶ Osawamick, interview.

³⁴⁷ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

members. Do they really want the language?"³⁴⁸ When I asked whether she believed there was a connection between AR and self-determination she offered her explanation for what is wrong and its remedy.

*We have to do it on our own. We cannot depend on anybody else. We are always depending. We are always depending on the government to give us some money. We're depending on an institution. I know that, for sure, financial resources are required to accomplish some things, but I think, if it's in our hearts, we must pick that up and start doing it ourselves. That's what self-determination is: just do it. Once we are determined as a people that we are going to revitalize our language, then we are going to get up and do it however we can. I think there's too much dependency and that's a learned thing. We learn to be dependent on the government. We learn to be dependent on institutions. "Well, let somebody else do it or the government won't give us any money." I think we have to look beyond that without depending on it and we have to take it into our own hands and do it our own way.*³⁴⁹

Nolan described self-determination as an Anishinaabe custom of mutual support that worked without coercion or financial incentives.

*Are those type of people still around who believe that way? I think we have to get that back. That was one of, I believe, our own Anishinaabe ways. You didn't depend on anybody. You just went ahead and did it and, if people wanted to help, they'd come out and help. A long time ago there was working bees. Somebody wanted to get their roof done. The person who owned the house with the roof that needs to be fixed would announce and let other people know, "I'm going to re-do the roof on this weekend coming." You just mention it and people showed up to help. Women showed up to cook for the workers. But now, it's very hard to find somebody to come and do the roof without having to pay them some money. We have lost that. So this person has to re-do his roof and he makes an announcement or tells somebody, "I'm going to be fixing my roof this weekend." OK. Let's put that example to speakers. I am going to start speaking the language to whoever is going to listen.*³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ Nolan, interview.

³⁴⁹ Nolan, interview.

³⁵⁰ Nolan, interview.

As Nolan stated, the restoration of Anishinaabemowin will not succeed if Anishinaabeg remain apathetic and complacent. Understanding the roots of this apathy offers possibilities for revitalization.

Some Elders get so frustrated over the fact that people aren't learning to speak our language. I think there is a mental barrier there for whatever reason and maybe it has to do with shame around the language that is still lingering from the residential school system. My grandfather said that governance is all about being self-determining on a personal level, on a community level, as well as nationally and internationally, but it has to start with ourselves. Our languages have been harmed on so many levels but we have to make the decision within ourselves to do something about it. I think the only way that we are going to be able to maintain the language is for each one of us to wake up and realize its importance.³⁵¹

Fontaine offered her grandfather as a role model for acting, on an individual and family level, to restore Indigenous languages.

I also think that from a personal point of view that my grandfather passed on a legacy of valuing our language. When my grandfather noticed that his children were losing the ability to communicate with him in Cree, he took them on the trapline and hid them and immersed them in the language. He did this during a time when it was against the law for any parent to prevent their children from attending school. This was an act of resilience and love but more importantly my grandfather loved the Cree language and he desperately wanted his children to speak their language. My grandfather's act of bravery has such a strong impact on me: It is an act of governance on the most fundamental level. It also indicated to me that our governance structures are based on the relationships that we have to each other, and that the values that provide important groundwork to establish relationships are embedded in our language.³⁵²

Another example of this self-determining approach is the establishment of the Anishinaabe-Mushkegowuk-Onkwehonwe Language Commission (AMOLC). Nelson Toulouse is one of the founders and the chief commissioner, and he described how the AMO language commission is seeking to support Indigenous language work throughout Ontario.

³⁵¹ Fontaine, interview.

³⁵² Fontaine, interview.

And when it comes to language there's some very specific things that need to be done: development of language itself requires research. We need to develop new words. There's really no standardization of writing or actual word development itself. So we need to be able to create that place or ability to come together and agree on what those standards are. Even if you look at fluency levels and proficiency, I mean that doesn't exist but we need to create those things and I think cultural centers have certainly a big part to play. But when it comes to those other things, they don't have that mandate, and ourselves as a commission, we can establish our relationships with various ministries that fall under those certain categories so we can do that.³⁵³

Toulouse originally envisioned the language commission as a vehicle to coordinate AR with Indigenous political organizations in Ontario.

We are connected to the political body. The way that we are connected, and it was mostly at my insistence, that when we're given a mandate to do these things to revitalize the language, I made sure that through that mandate that, personally, I as chief commissioner am obligated to report to the chiefs in assembly once a year. So that was granted and it probably made things easier to get support. Historically, I think politically we've supported things and granted maybe certain privileges that this new body can do things. But sometimes what's happened, with good intentions, is we develop these things and they kind of take off on their own and then they're all out of control. So I didn't want to see that. Especially with our language right? You do want to maintain some connection because you need their support³⁵⁴.

Toulouse's efforts are an encouraging example of progressive Anishinaabe political leadership. Shirley Williams was pleased to see that language revitalization is now on the Anishinaabe political agenda.

Politically, I think our political leaders are more aware of our language issues now and movement into revitalization of Anishinaabemowin. I know, in the past, I think, for self-government, language was never a part. Now they have interpreters for the language in the political meetings.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ Toulouse, interview.

³⁵⁴ Toulouse, interview.

³⁵⁵ Williams, interview.

Overcoming Obstacles

Finding resources is a challenge, and previous chapters have listed several examples of how funding limits the effectiveness and scope of AR work. Many participants commented on their disappointment with all levels of government for their failure to fund language programs. Shirley Williams placed the responsibility on the federal government for failing to back up its residential school apology with appropriate measures to undo the harm they wreaked on Indigenous peoples.

They destroyed our languages... You talk about forgiveness? The greatest thing that they can do is to restore our languages and give us the help that we need in order to restore our languages and restore our pride amongst our people.³⁵⁶

Shirley Williams also chided Anishinaabe politicians for neglecting language programs. Many participants, as described in Chapter Two, became motivated to do revitalization work out of concern that Indigenous political leaders were not doing enough to support their languages. Williams summed up these concerns in her interview.

For a long time the political leaders were in support of the languages, but not in terms of money. I heard a chief say, "Well, you can't eat the language." The economy was more important - putting food on the table - than the language. But the language is just as important as the economy because our language is our identity. We can't go anywhere else to learn if we forget the language. Our language was given by the Creator to us - that's what we believe. If we lose it then we have nothing. We don't become distinct people.³⁵⁷

Howard Webkamigad also mentioned the dilemma of depending on federal funding to provide basic community services.

³⁵⁶ Williams, interview.

³⁵⁷ Williams, interview.

*We're still tied to the government. We're still not self-determining, if that's such a word. How does language fit into that? Well I guess language really doesn't fit into it right now because, like I said, they themselves don't see it as important.*³⁵⁸

There are many success stories of impressive language projects that are self-financed by their organizers. Maya Chacaby succeeded in getting a \$1000 grant from the University of Toronto that covered a range of student activities over the course of that academic year.

*We did all of the socials, six in total, that includes feasts and meals, all of the materials for the activities plus two theatre performances and an ending ceremony recognizing everybody's achievements. We did all of that for \$1000. We had a few other little donations from the school but \$1000 covered it all. ... [I]t was a small student achievement grant but \$1000 is something that could be fundraised, or you could do a potluck, or the kind of gifts we gave everybody. I made up a whole review package of everything that they had learned that year and put them into nice books, and gave them a braid of sweetgrass, and that was their gifts.*³⁵⁹

Chacaby demonstrated that energy and enthusiasm can stretch the limited funding provided for Indigenous language work. Mary Young maintained that a lot can be done without funding to revitalize Anishinaabemowin without funding.

*I don't think you need big steps. You just need to introduce it - you just need to let people feel that it's ok. It's as simple as that sometimes. I think sometimes we spend too much time saying we don't have the money. You don't need money in those kinds of situations.*³⁶⁰

Young has seen that Anishinaabeg are willing to volunteer their time to promote Anishinaabemowin.

I bring in different Elders, different speakers. But my challenge earlier was that I knew I was supposed to give gifts to people but, because I didn't grow up with the culture, I didn't know about giving tobacco. You don't need money for that. I always thought I had to have honorarium because that was what was talked about always at home - not just my home but in

³⁵⁸ Webkamigad, interview.

³⁵⁹ Chacaby, interview.

³⁶⁰ Young, interview.

First Nations' community. "We can't do this unless we have this money." I still had that perception in my head when I realized, "No, you don't need that, you need energy from other people."³⁶¹

This willingness of volunteers has been crucial because no levels of government have funded Indigenous languages adequately. This raises an important question. How should people be appropriately compensated for their work without being or feeling exploited? Young provided some examples of how she has recruited local community members to assist her at the University of Winnipeg. Barb Nolan also recognized the potential for volunteerism, but acknowledged that people need to be compensated in some alternative manner for their efforts.

We need to train these people, we've got to train them how to speak to [learners] and then provide them with some incentive as well. That's where financial resources are needed. You don't expect somebody to go there for free. But then again I look at it, "No. Let's not worry about the money. Let's just depend on our families."³⁶²

Large-scale initiatives will require substantial resources. Nelson Toulouse described his work with the AMO language commission in Ontario, which is one of the most ambitious language revitalization projects in Canada.

So it's a whole gamut to develop the resources, to establish the commission, a lexicon committee, all of those things. To develop a curriculum team and establish the formal relationships, and become maybe the official body that works with the Ministry of Education on some level to establish standards, and to work even with the Attorney General's office and create language laws. To create various courses and the ability to certify court interpreters is an example. That's some of the stuff I saw in New Zealand, is that [its Maori language] commission was the body that certified court interpreters and developed those courses. So yeah we could do a lot if we had proper resources.³⁶³

³⁶¹ Young, interview.

³⁶² Nolan, interview

³⁶³ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

Colonization has had many intergenerational effects beyond assimilative education. The dispossession of Indigenous lands, and the imposition of the reserve system have forced many Anishinaabeg to migrate outside their home communities. Melvin Peltier recounted how Anishinaabeg are still adjusting to the loss of their traditional subsistence-based economy and its impact on meeting their educational needs.

In order to survive in today's world you need to work outside your community. Gone are the days of being able to sustain yourself through harvesting within your own community. A lot of people now are professionally qualified to work and that work takes them outside the reserves and in an urban environment, that they too want to keep their language alive, which is the good thing about our program. We're able to provide that to them within that urban setting. And we do try and accommodate their needs as well, let's say some of the community members aren't able to take a program during the day because they work, we are looking at offering the program as an evening incentive down the road for them to come and learn.³⁶⁴

Naokwegijig-Corbiere agreed that learners face other obstacles besides a lack of funding.

I'm a very pragmatic person, and it's hard for me to come up with ideas of what needs to be done when I'm aware of the constraints people are under. People have to work. People have kids. They want their kids to participate in extra-curricular activities. There are daycare issues... [I am] painfully aware of how few households there are now where there is a fluent speaker.³⁶⁵

Even fluent speakers find limited opportunities to interact in Anishinaabemowin.

Most Anishinaabemowin speakers are now bilingual and they end up switching to English.

It's so much easier for us speakers to put our language aside to accommodate the English speakers so they won't feel excluded, and you don't want to exclude them because these are your loved ones, this is

³⁶⁴ Peltier, interview.

³⁶⁵ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

*your spouse, or this is your daughter's boyfriend or your son's girlfriend, whatever, and you want these people to feel welcome in the family if they are a girlfriend or boyfriend or a daughter-in-law or a son-in-law. And just to be hospitable, to show them that you're welcoming and that you love them, it's easier for us to switch into English than these people to have to begin to speak Anishinaabemowin simply because their mother-in-law or father-in-law or their spouse's grandparents speak the language.*³⁶⁶

Naokwegijig-Corbiere described the dilemma of disappearing language domains.

Anishinaabemowin used to be the only language spoken in Anishinaabe ceremonies, communities, homes and political meetings. Today, it is in decline everywhere.

*I see it all around, even in the work context. ... Like if you're not a language teacher, it doesn't even occur to you necessarily, "By speaking English routinely, I'm devaluing my language." It doesn't occur to you that you're doing that, or it's not something you're doing intentionally. You just don't know the significance of switching to English. It becomes a habit that carries over even with fellow Anishinaabemowin speakers. So that even, often times, I will try consciously to start off in the language with the secretary. I'm talking work stuff with her, like "I need these photocopies for 3:00 today, could you get them done?" "Gdaade-zhitoonan na nanda photocopies? Wii-kinoomaageyaanh nso-dibigaanek." And then she might answer, "Ohh nahaaw," but then, usually quite early on, if we have an extended thing to discuss, we'll switch over to English, then next thing you know, we're carrying on in English.*³⁶⁷

To recover this lost language domain in the workplace, Liz Osawamick recommended that Native organizations encourage their staff to speak their languages. She suggested that one way to begin is by greeting people in local Indigenous languages to try and reestablish their presence at work and to promote revitalization.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

³⁶⁷ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

³⁶⁸ Osawamick, interview.

Anishinaabemowin for Decolonizing Governance

Darrell Boissoneau is a former chief of his community, Garden River First Nation, who now serves as the president of the Shingwauk Kinooamaage Gamig. He believed there is a connection between restoring Anishinaabemowin and traditional Anishinaabe governance.

There's a huge connection and I think that as we strive to develop our own systems of governments and governance, whatever part of Canada we come from, we're going to have to go back to our terms and our terminologies of what it is that governed us in the past. So, if it's our clans system, for example, if it's the different dodems we need to utilize those, and we need to somehow bring that information back to the communities. If we were to do a survey of our communities, we would certainly find out and discover that there is this lack of information that is amongst our people with regards to governments and governance and what it is that governed us in the past and what we are today. What we are today is a lot different than what we were in the past. A lot of our people have come to believe that the Indian Act is our source of government, right? That piece of legislation? But it's not. It's something that has been forced upon us and that we've kind of adopted over these many years of using that piece of legislation.³⁶⁹

Naokwegijig-Corbiere also advocated “strategically” using Anishinaabe concepts and terms in modern governance. However, she carefully pointed out the inherent difficulties of trying to translate English political concepts into Anishinaabemowin.

So I think if we apply Anishinaabemowin, for example, to governance, -- certainly, work it in as much as we can. But I guess realizing that it might not necessarily express all the ideas that need to be expressed when we talk about governance processes more clearly or precisely. Sometimes the opposite might happen, you might end up with more wordy documents, harder to understand, easier to get confused. But I think I use it strategically, in a sense of asserting our distinct nationhoods, that we are a people with distinct roots, with distinct experiences. And again that relates to why the language is important to me. It's clear I work in a very different culture from what people think of as Native culture. It's even more

³⁶⁹ Boissoneau, interview.

different than that in a university context. I mean we never had universities, did we? And it's a strange kind of job that I have. But Anishinaabemowin reminds me and makes it clear to others that although I might live much like you and do many of the same things you do – read articles, critique articles, write reports, write journal articles – I come from a totally different set of roots. I come from the first gaa-bi-ntami-yaajig maampii kiing, [meaning] “those who were first here on this land”. And whatever all that implies, whether it's sets of experiences, whether that's the unique way we express our way of life.³⁷⁰

Naokwegijig-Corbiere's fluency provides her with a powerful intellectual process to distinguish what is foreign and what is Indigenous by analyzing each language.

I've given a lot of thought to governance, working in the language, because of the issue related to terminology. ... A lot of those different bodies, even a word like committee, we don't have a word for in Anishinaabemowin. In an academic context, the type of committee is a significant thing, so it's useful to identify the committee as senate, which has a lot of authority and other committees that have less authority or other committees are just plain old ad hoc, they're basically working groups or task forces that kind of thing. Part of it is the terminology that appears in English that we don't have parallel words for in our language and even the processes, seeking approval, making a proposal, even those ideas. The closest we can get to say, if I were to talk about, even the word “suggestion,” even if you were to talk about trying to simplify “proposal” and say, “Well, a proposal is basically a suggestion for something to be done,” I can't think of a way to say “suggestion” in Anishinaabemowin, even as a verb. So often I'll explain it, if I wanted to try explaining it in Anishinaabemowin, “asking that something be done”, “Gwedweng gegoo wii-zhichigeyaad,” ndaa-kid “university,” “Asking that this university do something,” – or “gegoo wii-zhitoowaad oshkiyii,” “to make something new.” ... They're not short words, they're not short expressions, which is another factor that I think leads us to switch readily into English. Because there are things you can say very precisely in English, where we basically need to express them as a full clause defining this thing if you want to insist on expressing them in Anishinaabemowin. I've done a fair bit of translation work and I routinely get into those issues. So those are some of the challenges there.³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

³⁷¹ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

Naokwegijig-Corbiere provided other examples of the difficulty of conveying concepts of governance across the linguistic divide. She explained that even the basic building blocks of political science, such as the concept of “nation,” have no equivalent in Anishinaabemowin.

And then in relation to governance, because I have done some legal related translation work... I can't even think of a word for “First Nations,” the concept of nation, to find an equally short word in Anishinaabemowin. How can we distinguish that from a nation as it's understood like the Canadian state, region, province, [or] local like the city of Greater Sudbury, that kind of municipal government? Yeah, we have a lot of thinking to do and I don't know that we would necessarily be able to find things that convey the exact connotations as those terms do in English. Like what's the difference between calling something a region versus a province? You know Indian Affairs, their term for region, they mean provinces, right? Head office is in Ottawa Indian Affairs, that's the big central office, but then there's the Ontario Region, the Manitoba Region, and so on. But in the broader Canadian government context there is a federal government, and then there is a provincial government. Yes, it's tricky (laughter).³⁷²

Naokwegijig-Corbiere's description of the difficulty of translating foreign political concepts into Anishinaabemowin raises important questions about the philosophical foundations for Anishinaabe governance. A generation ago, Anishinaabe Elder Wilfred Pelletier lamented the infiltration of English and politics into Anishinaabe communities. He wrote, “This will be remembered as the political period, the time when an entire generation of Indians all over the continent became skillful enough at the game of politics to play it in competition with whites. I say that as an old, experienced political gamester.”³⁷³ Are Anishinaabeg still stuck, as Pelletier warned a generation ago, playing this political game instead of restoring Anishinaabe governance?

³⁷² Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

³⁷³ Pelletier and Poole, *No Foreign Land*, 148.

Embedded Governance Principles in Anishinaabemowin

Canadian Political theorist James Tully explains that language embeds political concepts in thought. When Indigenous languages are marginalized, their forms of governance are also disempowered.

The motley language of western political thought has two well-known characteristics. It is a language woven into the everyday political, legal and social practices of these societies and, in a slightly more technical and abstract key, a language of interpretation and critical reflection on the practices of these societies in the institutions of law, policy and academia. In short, it is the language of both political self-understanding and self-reflection of these societies and their non-indigenous members. It is not the language of political self-understanding and self-reflection of indigenous peoples, even though they are constrained to use it.³⁷⁴

Anishinaabeg scholars also recognize how English concepts have displaced or redefined Anishinaabe self-concepts as peoples. In Chapter One, Odawa scholar Cecil King voiced his frustration with the necessity of emancipating Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous peoples from the conceptual constructs created by social scientists.

Having to define ourselves from the start with in appropriate English terms is not sufficient for our understanding. It is confining, and it is wrong. It seems that we must first defend ourselves against scholarly categories. We must find a way to break out of these cages. That takes a lot of unnecessary, unproductive time and energy and money.³⁷⁵

Basil Johnston has made similar calls for an Anishinaabe response to academic and popular misconceptions of Anishinaabeg. Johnston argues convincingly for analyzing language to understand the Anishinaabe worldview.

Much work and study remains to be done in order to understand Anishinaabae ideas and institutions. Until that study is done, the

³⁷⁴ James Tully, "The Struggle of Indigenous Peoples for and of Freedom," in *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous People*, 36-59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36.

³⁷⁵ King, "Here Come the Anthros," 117.

*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.*³⁷⁶

Johnston and King have called on Anishinaabeg to conceptually decolonize by returning to Anishinaabemowin as a guide to understanding Anishinaabe governance themselves prior to colonization. Anishinaabe-kwe scholar Debra McGregor describes one technique that she employs to verify the existence of Anishinaabe concepts compared to those in English. She calls this technique the “language rule” and it involves asking a fluent speaker whose first language is an Indigenous language whether they have a word in that language for this concept. She offers examples in her research for the terms: environment, traditional environmental knowledge (TEK), or sustainable development.

*These people are usually highly knowledgeable about their cultural traditions, values, and so on. I ask them to think about the concept I am interested in to see if there is a corresponding concept in their own language. Not surprisingly, often there is not. In many cases, expressing even a similar meaning takes a significant amount of time and involves constructing Indigenous knowledge in a variety of different ways.*³⁷⁷

There have been many attempts to make Anishinaabemowin accommodate European concepts by translation. The earliest examples would likely have been the work of Christian missionaries. More recently, Canada has occasionally solicited translation into Indigenous languages. Elections Canada is

³⁷⁶ Johnston, "How do we learn language? What do we learn?," 51.

³⁷⁷ Debra McGregor, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Sustainable Development: Towards Coexistence," in *In the Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects, and Globalization*, 72-91 (London : Zed Books, 2004), 75.

one example as it has provided voting guides in Indigenous languages.

Naokwegijig-Corbiere described the difficulty of such translation when she was working on the Ipperwash Inquiry as it investigated the shooting death of Dudley George, an unarmed Anishinaabe protester, by the Ontario Provincial Police.

They would have “subpoena,” “having standing,” in the legal sense. I ended up pulling out my dictionary and having it beside me, “Okay, so how can I explain, how can I render this in Anishinaabemowin?” So the same problem with respect to governance, if you were setting up a constitution, how would you render the kinds of concepts you would have to include in there? Some of them, yeah, you can render. But some of them might be really difficult. Or some you might be able to render them in a three or four word phrase, but if it's a long paragraph, then doing that makes the paragraph confusing. Whereas in English you have a sentence with three or four key concepts, and each of those concepts in Anishinaabemowin is like a full-blown clause. You end up with a very long sentence and you can't decode it anymore because it's become way too wordy in Anishinaabemowin.³⁷⁸

Naokwegijig-Corbiere's observations reveal the challenges inherent in trying to translate between different philosophical systems based in distinct languages. This is especially true when one such system is being imposed on the other.

One pathway to decolonizing current governance, that acknowledges these difficulties, is to focus on how Anishinaabeg governed themselves prior to colonization.

We do have a rich language, but the richness evolved around a way of life, a large part of that, we don't practice anymore. Certainly we have a lot of terms relating to outside activities, nature and so on. But now, for many – I don't know if it's many, but a good number of us – a large part of activities are involved with work that was not traditionally part of our culture. ... Traditionally we never had to do such things, right? And then the kinds of issues that we have to discuss, like the legal issues I mentioned, governance issues.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁸Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

³⁷⁹Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

Naokwegijig-Corbiere emphasized that colonization displaced Anishinaabe governance with European-derived political systems. This absence of Anishinaabe terms for English-language political concepts indicates, through contrast, Anishinaabe governance principles.

Of course we governed. Of course we had to do things, but we didn't have to do them, explain them, or bring in other concepts such as region, and province, or municipality, and use the notion of First Nations, because we didn't have to explain to people that we were here first and that we had a cohesive government system, and that we weren't – whatever way we've been depicted – lawless or whatever. We had a way of ensuring the well-being of all. We just did it. We didn't need to explain how we did it. Maybe that's why a lot of these terms haven't emerged. Many things we didn't need to explain, we just did them.³⁸⁰

The lack of terms for bureaucratic and hierarchical structures demonstrates that Anishinaabeg enjoyed freedom and independence that is almost inconceivable in modern politics. A careful analysis of Anishinaabe language of governance also reveals what is foreign, and what has been imposed upon Anishinaabe governance since colonization.

Naokwegijig-Corbiere's work reveals how translating English concepts into Anishinaabemowin can uncover traditional Anishinaabe principles of governance. Alan Corbiere has also been researching this relationship between Anishinaabemowin and Anishinaabe governance but his work goes in the opposite direction. Corbiere conducts historical research on Anishinaabe terms for governance to understand how governance has been affected by colonization. His work illustrates how Anishinaabemowin's presence has declined alongside traditional governance processes.

³⁸⁰ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

I think self-determination is different from self-government and governance but the whole idea is that you learn who you are, and, based on those teachings and values, that is what will set your priorities. And that influences your governance and how you effect that governance. If you're doing it all in Anishinaabe, then presumably you'd be effecting self determination. But an example, since I'm somewhat of a historian too. Back in the 1900s, the Indian agents had bands draft up their own BCRs (Band Council Resolutions). The earlier ones – and today people always make fun that the first bylaws were dog bylaws – but back then, it was actually about cows and cattle and having fences and making people do road work and stuff like that. So whether or not you look at it as a governance structure, that was written in Ojibwe. Whether or not you're really imbuing your whole governance there at that point, what you're really doing there is adopting Zhaagnaash framework of governance and putting Anishinaabe labels on it.³⁸¹

Corbiere problematized the notion that Anishinaabemowin and English are incompatible since, historically, Anishinaabeg were able to continue using their language within the band council structure. However, it is important to realize that language shift to English did occur once the band council system was in place. This correlation is unlikely coincidental because English had now infiltrated another important domain that had, for thousands of years, been exclusively conducted in Anishinaabemowin. The *Indian Act* and the Indian agent introduced English to local governance and fluency in the colonial language soon became an important asset, if not a requirement, for elected band chiefs and councilors.

Naokwegijig-Corbiere witnessed the use of Anishinaabemowin at band council meetings when she served as band councilor. She recalled hearing other fluent speakers conduct band council business almost entirely in Anishinaabemowin.

³⁸¹ Corbiere, interview.

A lot of [band councilors] were Elders and were routinely expressing themselves in Anishinaabemowin. They would have ways of saying, "Well, I make this motion," and they would have ways of saying, "I second his motion," or "I second that." But something like "band council resolution," they would just call a band resolution because they did not have an Anishinaabemowin term for that kind of document. "Treaty rights." Hadn't even come up with a word for the word Treaty. I know it's an agreement but I don't know how to say agreement, in that sense. I know how to say, "I agree with that idea," we say it, "I think the same way." "Naasaab go genii ndinendam." So how does an expression, "I think the same way", "Naasaab go inendam," how can you work with that to stretch it to cover the meaning of an agreement of a form as a treaty, an agreement between nations? That's the challenge.³⁸²

Naokwegijig-Corbiere's example of how fluent speakers were able to still express themselves within a band council system challenges the notion that languages are fixed and unable to accommodate new ideas or new processes. Her personal experience and Corbiere's historical research indicate the potential of Anishinaabemowin to carry a new governance discourse that includes colonial political concepts.

Remembering Anishinaabe Governance

Corbiere has identified other important examples of how Anishinaabe governance has been affected by colonization. Corbiere linked the imposition of band council elections with this decline of Anishinaabe governance roles.

But earlier than that, in 1895, that's when the Canadian government started trying to do away with hereditary Chieftainship and the hereditary structures of governance and that's why they implemented that election mode of choosing leadership. So what had happened then, they called them the lifetime chief, and once the lifetime chief died around 1880, then they would hold an election. They would tell that community, "You have to hold an election now." So in Sagamok what they did, their chief died, they wrote a letter saying we now put so-and-so in as our chief and these are our councilors, and they still called the councilors "Giigido-inini." That means the speaking man, and then "Ogimaa," the chief. And then they

³⁸² Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

put in there the “Ogimaa-giigido,” our speaker, our chief speaker. That is one of the institutions, and they put that in the letter, “This is who we select as our chief speaker, as our orator.” So that would have been based on a traditional governance structure.

Likewise in M’Chigeeng, in 1895 they had the first election and they listed their councilors, and they put giigido-ininiwag, and then they had the list and then they had, “I’ve been elected as chief and I’ve been made the chief.” That’s what Raphael Wabange wrote in Ojibwe and then they listed the “Mazhiniwe” and that’s the chief’s assistant. They actually listed who the chief’s assistant was for M’Chigeeng. Now you look at any Indian Act Band that says, “We’re a custom code election,” nobody has elected a mazhiniwe nor a gimaa-giigido, a speaker. And that mazhiniwe was a pipe carrier.³⁸³

Corbiere pointed out that these traditional governance roles are rarely practiced and have been almost completely replaced by the *Indian Act* band councils. Anishinaabe political leaders were also once their communities’ ceremonial leaders but this is no longer the case. As a result, the original connection between governance and spirituality has been eroded.

Now the other thing is, they talk about how the Elders would always be consulted and now, you may see, in these speeches that are written, or petitions, a lot of the chiefs would say, “I’m just a young chief, all my old men have died.” So he’s talking about how he has no guiding Elders to assist him with whatever the issue is and then also using these mnemonic devices used, like wampum and other records that they used to effect their governance as well.

They don’t do all these ceremonial rituals anymore for the governance so whether or not language is integral to all that, of course I would say yes, because I bought into the whole thing, but I imagine somebody could sit here and argue with me saying, “No, we can do that ceremony in English, and we can do a reading of that wampum belt in English.” And I actually do read the wampum in English, but whether or not you can consult that spirit in English, I’ve heard many Elders say that the spirit won’t understand you in English, they’ll understand only that Ojibwe speaker. So that’s just what I’ve heard from those Elders, they say the spirit won’t understand. So that’s another issue when you’re effecting your governance, your Indigenous or Anishinaabe governance when you

³⁸³ Corbiere, interview.

*consult that spirit for guidance, it needs to be done in Ojibwe. That's what they say.*³⁸⁴

Corbiere suggested that conducting governance in English further distances Anishinaabeg from their traditions. He also provided another example of how traditional governance has changed over time as the clan system was often discarded, and then recently reincorporated in a modernized form but with its original meaning reified as a result.

The Anishinaabeg always believed we all belong to a clan. And those clans, they always said, a clan had specific attributes or characteristics. Now, in this modern sense, what people are saying instead of characteristics or inclinations, they say they have responsibilities. And that's what's supposed to be governing us. The Bear clan has justice and medicine. The Crane clan is external leadership and the Loon clan is internal leadership. But if you look at the historical record, all the chiefs weren't necessarily Crane clan chiefs or Loon clan chiefs; or the speakers who got up and spoke weren't always just the Loon clan.

*Mind you, they would say that's a clan chief, not the chief of the nation. Well, we didn't really have – nobody got up and pretended to speak for all the Ojibwe nation back then because there was too many bands. You could say, in this area, the Michigan area, all these chiefs would get together and form a confederacy and select a speaker or chief speaker for all of them. That was for that particular council, it didn't last for that chief's lifetime. They had these confederacies and they would select who would be the speaker for each time.*³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ Corbiere, interview.

³⁸⁵ Corbiere provided another example of a traditional governance role of a chief spokesperson, or “Ogimaa-Giigido”, who was entrusted to represent and speak on behalf of the community.

And even when this Manitoulin treaty went on, they had selected the Chief of Sheshegwaning to be what they called ogimaa-giigido, the chief speaker at that time and he was the one to represent. But that was just his task for that particular council, it didn't mean that every other council he was. He could have been selected, but it didn't mean that he was by default always going to be and it was based upon his speaking abilities that he was selected. So we have different layers of leadership and governance.

Corbiere questioned whether it would be possible to fully restore Anishinaabe governance that is based on the clan system and traditional worldview without restoring Anishinaabemowin.

Now what would be subject to debate [is] how you understand that clan relationship within the greater Anishinaabe worldview, and if you're implementing it in the proper way and effecting your governance based on the Anishinaabe values that are inherent in the language. Of course you're getting into a really subjective area because a lot of people would say, especially where the community no longer speaks any Ojibwe or Odawa. Let's say in Michigan, they would say, "I'm Odawa," or "I'm Ojibwe and we follow our clan teachings here and we administer our sovereignty based on our teachings." Now who are we to say that since they don't speak the language that they aren't effecting sovereignty based on Anishinaabe teachings? It's all in English but somehow, to me, it is diminished. The understanding, the implementation is diminished but it can be done.³⁸⁶

As Naokwegijig-Corbiere stated earlier in this chapter, translation is “tricky.” Meanings can be obscured when attempting to translate from one language to another. However, it is also possible to have meaning clarified when we work through this translation process. As Corbiere and Naokwegijig-Corbiere demonstrated above, Anishinaabe intellectuals are actively engaged in comparing Anishinaabe governance as it has changed over time. The ongoing challenge for Anishinaabeg is to determine the appropriate balance for traditional and modern forms of governance. The role of Anishinaabemowin is central to this debate and the next section explores the interplay between revitalizing both the language and traditional Anishinaabe governance.

³⁸⁶ Corbiere, interview.

Restoring Anishinaabemowin To Restore Anishinaabe Governance

For many Anishinaabeg, the language is crucial because it carries the community consensus of values that harmonized relationships. Nelson Toulouse reflected on growing up in Sagamok when the Indian Agent was still in control. He believed that, despite these colonial impositions, life was better in the community because Anishinaabemowin was still widely spoken.

If I went back to my own childhood and maybe the exception to my own childhood would be that we weren't in control of our lives. If we were to basically maybe insert our own self-governance and put a price tag on it but bring back what we had at that particular time. That was language and the whole value system attached with it.³⁸⁷

Toulouse explained that Anishinaabemowin and English each have embedded values.³⁸⁸ He believed Anishinaabemowin is more harmonious and English is more discordant.

³⁸⁷ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

³⁸⁸ According to Bowen, bridging the disconnect between learning the language and the associated values/worldview remains a problem even for immersion programs *Excellence in Tribal Government*, 13. Complaints included that the students still had “white thoughts” (14). Bowen cites an Anishinaabe Elder who explains that the students “are still thinking the white way. Now we have to get them to think the Ojibwe way to make them truly fluent” (14). The school’s 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)

Mary Hermes is a specialist in Anishinaabe language education and advocates teaching culture through language based on her decade-long research on cultural education in Anishinaabe communities in the USA. She warns that attempting to slot in Anishinaabemowin and culture into a regular school curriculum actually distorts both language and culture “Ma’lingan Is Just a Misspelling of the Word Wolf,” 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 she does not advocate throwing out cultural curriculum, because there is evidence 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 Anishinaabemowin and thinking Anishinaabe.

I think the key thing to me is that language commands respect. We've been so indoctrinated to think like the white man that we get into these confrontational discussions because that's what we see. And we don't give fair time for debate from all people that are involved. So to me, language talks about inclusion and the ability to participate in a fair, equitable way. English does not allow us to do this. You've got to scream; the loudest is the one that gets heard. In Anishinaabemowin that is not the case. We pay proper respect and protocol to whoever is conducting a certain meeting and the objective is to reach consensus on a certain issue. So there is way of doing that and the way is to ensure that it's equitable and everybody has a chance to voice a thought on the issue. And hopefully at the end of the day you all agree somewhat on what that ought to be. I think that's a major difference with language in Anishinaabemowin versus English. It's a different system altogether.³⁸⁹

Wilfred Pelletier attempted to distinguish how Anishinaabemowin and English each structure thinking differently from one another.

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

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)

³⁸⁹ Nelson Toulouse, interview.

*place if you listen for it. You'll hear it in pubs or bars, usually, when people have been drinking.*³⁹⁰

Pelletier found that even though he was bilingual it was still difficult to translate certain concepts from Anishinaabemowin into English.

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 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.

*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.*³⁹¹

Many research participants stated that language fluency should be a requirement of political leaders because of the close connection between Anishinaabe thought and Anishinaabemowin. Perry Bebamash described a “big connection” between self-determination and language that should influence who is eligible to become a community leader.

We can't govern ourselves if we don't know who we are. So we have to have that understanding of our history, our origins, our language, our

³⁹⁰ Pelletier and Poole, *No Foreign Land*, 204.

³⁹¹ Pelletier and Poole, *No Foreign Land*, 204-205.

*spirituality and who we are today, from what took place and where we're going to go and how we're going to go about doing things to make a good future for our people. So I think that's very important for self-government. Our leaders should be able to speak the language and I think it should be a requirement. Just looking at it as a reserve basis, I always, well not always but recently, I thought it would be a good idea to have a requirement that they should know the language to get elected for councilor or Chief and they should know about our culture and history and along with whatever education we need today to do these things to deal with this foreign society amongst us.*³⁹²

Basil Johnston spoke stridently about the need for Anishinaabe leaders to remember their responsibility to their cultural heritage. Johnston stated that every band councilor and employee should be required to speak the language, and that its revitalization requires community leaders to lead by example.

*The staff doesn't speak the language. The Board of Education members don't speak the language. So when kids see that the staff doesn't speak the language, doesn't care, "Why should I?"*³⁹³

Johnston said that Anishinaabeg have already forgotten so much that they must hire anthropologists to remind themselves of who they are. He feared that the day would come when the government would use language loss as an excuse to deny Indigenous peoples any special status in Canada because "you're no different from us."³⁹⁴

All participants agreed that the language is an important symbol of identity for individuals and communities. Johnston's warning recalls the political and symbolic significance of Indigenous languages that motivated Canada's efforts to silence them with assimilationist education policies. Canada has created the conditions for language loss in Indigenous communities, and Johnston is wise to

³⁹² Bebamash, interview.

³⁹³ Johnston, interview.

³⁹⁴ Johnston, interview.

suspect that this too will become a weapon in the colonizers' hands to attack Indigenous independence.

Naokwegijig-Corbiere also anticipated such attacks and cited the peoplehood matrix to dispute the notion that loss of language results in a loss of nationhood or peoplehood.

I think in many cases the language is irretrievable. Do they lose their peoplehood? No. Do they lose their nation? No, they're still going to be distinct nations. So peoplehood can be maintained without one's native language because there are many other things that we recognize as shared experience, as shared history. Of course ideally, it should be rooted in a distinct language and I will try my best to work toward that goal, as long as I'm working here. My pragmatic self [believes] the ideal might not happen.³⁹⁵

Alan Corbiere also cautioned against obsessing over authenticity and instead spoke in favour of appreciating and preserving a multiplicity of Anishinaabe ways.

It's that whole idea of true or pure Ojibwe. [It] is an argument that you're never going to win when you get into it. I think the better thing to do is actually try and learn as much as you can about all the dialects that are there, and that you're able to master how somebody says something in Maniwaki, Quebec, where they still make birch bark canoes... different pockets of communities have been able to maintain traditions and they're able, therefore, to contribute to the overall language revitalization, as well as revitalization through the language of different concepts that are, if you want to say, inherent in our language that can be used to pass on to our children and grandchildren, to use as a template of Anishinaabe thought, as encapsulated in a language or a term in the language, to study and to incorporate into our lives.

That's what I think about that governance. It's based on if you are able to say that we have somebody there who is a mazhiniwe, an ogimaa, and a giigido-inini as well as an ogimaa-giigido, that these people are part of it and even some would say an "Oshkaabewis" (ceremonial helper) was there, and we would have, we would say people who have effected our governance. You need those jiiskewinini midewininiwak (ceremonial

³⁹⁵ Naokwegijig-Corbiere, interview.

*leaders who run the shake tent), those people we look to for direction and guidance.*³⁹⁶

Johnston's understanding of traditional Anishinaabe governance supports Corbiere's call for a pluralist approach to cultural revitalization. Johnston asserts that there was little sense of national or tribal unity among Anishinaabemowin speakers even though they recognized common linguistic and cultural heritage. Johnston explains that Anishinaabe leadership was based on persuasion and was temporary. "The safety and autonomy of the species is best served by following diverse paths in small units... Leadership is a burden, not to be sought, but perhaps to be avoided."³⁹⁷ This notion of leadership fits well with the type of organizing evident in the AR movement: diffused, diverse, and conducted in small units.

³⁹⁶ Corbiere provided an example of how the shake tent ceremony was incorporated into Anishinaabe governance.

There's just an episode in 1763 when Alexander Henry's on the north shore and he says that the runners came with wampum. Sir William Johnson had sent them up. And then the chief calls the jiiskewinini, the man who runs the shake tent and he asked him, "Sir William Johnson, will he receive us as friend or foe." And the spirit leaves and he comes back and he says, "The fires are lit, the kettles are ready, Sir William Johnson will accept any Indian as a friend." So then he asks him again, "Well, are there any soldiers down there?" So that turtle goes down and flies down, goes down there to Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, goes up to the St. Lawrence and comes back and plunks into that shaking tent and he says, "There weren't many redcoats on Lake Erie or Lake Ontario but by the time he got up to the St. Lawrence there were more redcoats than leaves on the trees and he would never be able to conquer them." So they decided, they said, the turtle also told them that they would get presents and that Sir William Johnson wanted to get a treaty with them. So they decided based on what the spirit had told them, that they would go down to that Treaty of Niagara in 1764. So a chief, basically consulted the jiiskewinini, the shaking tent man before taking an action, a governing action for his community. He consulted the spirit before actually doing something. So that is what I find is largely missing in current affairs when you want to talk about indigenous structure.

³⁹⁷ Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 62.

Boissoneau agreed that the Anishinaabeg must return to their roots as they chart their own futures, independent from any imposed or prescribed political model.

*The Anishinaabeg Nation is a large nation...so we're not going to fit into a self-government arrangement. We're going to have to design our own. We know that a lot of our governance has been passed on to us through our oral tradition. We know that some of it has been passed down through birchbark scrolls. We've seen, as part of our ceremonies, in terms of roles and responsibilities of leadership and the roles and responsibilities of citizens. Those are the kinds of things we really need to take a hard look at if we want to modernize it. I think that's a key to what we need to do as to how we're going to modernize our governments' moving in to the future. It doesn't mean that we leave behind the principles and values of what it is that's important to us. Those have to remain there. We can expand. One of the things that we're finding out, that people want as well, is a constitution. What does a constitution look like? What are the elements of a constitution? They want to see a written document, which was not a part of how we governed ourselves, today. It's a valid request. How do we finesse that up? Again, from our worldview, that incorporates our principles and our values, our old traditions and doesn't abandon who we are as a people, but also expresses our modern day thinking as well, and gives intellectual thought to the future. I think that the politics behind that, whether it's a First Nation chief and council, if it's a tribal council, if it is the Anishinaabeg Nation or a national body of some type, needs to support and embrace those kinds of ideas. For far too long, we've tried to mirror ourselves on some other system, whether that's a parliamentary system or municipal system or something that is foreign to our way of thinking. We need to think from what it is that our grandmothers and our grandfathers thought we are and still are.*³⁹⁸

Shirley Williams believed that many Anishinaabeg politicians are becoming increasingly supportive of Anishinaabemowin revitalization efforts. She reported that more of them are overcoming their shame surrounding Indigenous language use and are now speaking in Anishinaabemowin.

Language is also used by the chiefs. If they know the language, they use it. Before that, like everything else, we were ashamed to speak our own language. That's because we were forbidden to speak our own language

³⁹⁸ Boissoneau, interview.

*and taught to be ashamed of our own language.*³⁹⁹

Anishinaabeg are also growing increasingly aware of the political implications of Indigenous languages. For example, the regional political organization for Anishinaabe bands in Ontario, the Anishinabek Nation, declared Anishinaabemowin its official language and is implementing a training program so that all of its office staff can provide bilingual services. Anishinaabemowin's designation as the official language of an Anishinaabe political organization, at this early stage, is primarily symbolic, but remains an important step to restoring the language's esteem or prestige in the eyes of the Anishinaabeg.

Although Anishinaabemowin revitalization movements are too recent to be able to predict any long-term impact on political institutions for Anishinaabeg, they have already had a significant influence on language learning initiatives with the emergence of language camps, university courses, and even adult immersion programs in Sault Sainte Marie and M'Chigeeng First Nation in Ontario. Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig is poised to be the leader for Anishinaabe post-secondary education.

*Coming from the vision of Chief Shingwauk, it's a spiritual journey for us. People often think that Chief Shingwauk's vision was about residential schools. It wasn't. As I said at the beginning of our interview, his vision was about our people, the needs of our people and our valuable contributions that we made as well. It's about our culture, our traditions and language. Shingwauk never envisioned that we abandon those at all. At the time of his vision, that was his first language, Anishinaabemowin, right? We want to ensure that that happens for the future. Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, maybe in my own biased view, is going to be that vehicle. If Shingwauk's vision was not meant to happen, it would have died a long time ago. We wouldn't be talking about it 175 years later. But we are.*⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ Williams, interview.

⁴⁰⁰ Boissoneau, interview.

According to Boissoneau, momentum is building to finally implement Chief Shingwauk's original vision for Anishinaabeg.

Our local First Nation governments have been a tremendous support in terms of what we've been doing. Not only our local First Nations government, but all of our political organizations have come to the table to lend their support. They see the benefit of what we're doing and they see the long term investment in terms of our young people. They want to support them, not only in their educational aspirations, but in the area of language. It's been important and critical for our people to give and provide that type of support. In addition to that, however, we also have the support of the local community of Sault Ste. Marie, Algoma University and scholars and educators. People really see the importance of what we're doing. Forging and creating these partnerships with a vast variety of stakeholders is important to everyone. We feel that although this is our struggle, it requires the support of everyone. Although we're going to be leading this initiative, we're going to be needing people to come to our fire and sit with us to make sure this happens.⁴⁰¹

He believed government support exists to restore both Anishinaabe governance and language.

It's not only our people who are talking about it, others are talking about it as well. The Premier of Ontario is talking about it. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is talking about it. The Minister of Education is talking about it. The Minister of Indian Affairs for the federal government is talking about Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig and Shingwauk's vision. Our people are talking about it. Educators and scholars are talking about it. ... It's out there and it's the job and responsibility of each and every one of us to ensure that it does happen. This is an exciting journey and an exciting time. We reach our hand out in friendship to everyone to join with us in embarking on this great journey to make sure that Shingwauk's vision truly reflects what it is that he dreamed about 175 years ago.⁴⁰²

Conclusion

Kathy Absolon explained that it was through ceremonies that she understood the causes and consequences of Anishinaabemowin's disappearance are rooted in Canadian Indian policy.

⁴⁰¹ Boissoneau, interview.

⁴⁰² Boissoneau, interview.

I started going to the ceremonies and started hearing over, and over, and over again the message we have to learn our language, that our culture is in our language. And if we lose our language, an important piece of who we are is gone as well. It's not even if we lose our language, we haven't lost anything, it's not like we've misplaced it. Our language was attacked; it was exterminated. Attempts were made to exterminate our language so in knowing that, and in studying the history of what happened to us, the colonization, I started to understand that not having the language wasn't just because my mom didn't want to teach it to us, or that she didn't know it, the reasons we didn't have it were far more complicated than that. There was a political agenda to exterminate us as a people, there was a political agenda to exterminate our language, our culture, and our connections to the land, and to each other. When I started understanding that, when I started to hear the power of we have to learn our language, I started feeling such a responsibility to not let that die. And it's not even, it's not up here that I feel that (gestures to her head), it's in here (gestures to her heart). It's my spirit that feels that, that's what really draws my dedication and my commitment.⁴⁰³

It was through her participation in Anishinaabe ceremonies that Absolon became motivated to restore Anishinaabemowin for herself and her family. Her experience is congruent with the Peoplehood research paradigm, introduced in Chapter One, as an interpretive model for understanding how Indigenous peoples are strengthened by their connections to the taproots of ceremonies, land, language and sacred history.

As explained at the end of Chapter Four and the beginning of this chapter, the AR movement, as an “inward-focussed” cultural revitalization movement, is directed primarily towards “making” rather than “taking power.” Absolon is an ideal example of someone who was transformed by cultural revitalization through her participation in Anishinaabe ceremonies. This experience also politicized her and she is consciously confronting colonization by mobilizing other Anishinaabeg to participate in AR. Absolon’s experience also tells us that the AR movement’s

⁴⁰³ Absolon, interview.

“inward” orientation does not preclude possibilities for taking back power from the Canadian state and restoring it to local Indigenous communities. Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows is convinced that language revitalization is itself an act of self-determination that challenges and undermines Canada’s colonial *Indian Act*.

Unfortunately, the Indian Act has proven inadequate to our educational needs and has not facilitated wisdom. Sections 114 to 122 of the Indian Act currently set the framework for formal learning on reserve. These sections have failed us miserably because they have been largely neglected. Wisdom suggests that these sections of the Indian Act be replaced through direct action or negotiated agreement. Direct action is possible because the language of these sections is permissive, not mandatory. This means the Act allows education to be organized in a particular way but does not insist that be the case. While access to government funding might be difficult if communities did not follow the Indian Act’s procedures, such access is not impossible. Maori language nest programs in New Zealand provide an example of education that began as community based learning centers, free from government support. These programs have been very successful in revitalizing Maori language and tradition. They grew through the direct action of parents working together. Wisdom does not always wait for government support.⁴⁰⁴

Borrows’ identifies language revitalization as a potential spark that could reignite true Anishinaabe governance that restores the confederacy of the three fires, the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi, the three peoples who comprise the Anishinaabeg. The final chapter will further examine how the connection

⁴⁰⁴ John Borrows, *Seven Generations, Seven Teachings: Ending The Indian Act*, Research Paper for the National Centre for First Nations Governance (Vancouver: National Centre for First Nations Governance, 2008), 12. Borrows maintains the Canadian government still owes its support to Indigenous education but asserts the right for Indigenous peoples to self-determine the forms that education might take. “However, if government support is available negotiated agreements could lead to significant resources for controlling educational paths.”

between governance and language revitalization may lead to an Anishinaabe resurgence against colonization and the restoration of its peoplehood.

Chapter Six: Reflections on the Findings

*True leadership is rarely the consequence of election, appointment, dictatorship, or inheritance. Good leadership overall is much too critical to be left to elected politicians, monarchs, managers, administrators, supervisors, and directors. Having authority does not make anyone a leader. True leadership is exercised when someone performs a necessary or critical task and accomplishes an objective, thereby setting an example. Leadership by example, then, is the truest and most effective kind. We are more likely to follow someone who has done it before he or she asks or tells us to do it.*⁴⁰⁵

This dissertation explored Anishinaabemowin revitalization to find out its participants' motivations, methods, and mobilization strategies in order to better understand how Indigenous language revitalization movements contribute to decolonization and self-determination. Anishinaabeg have organized to revitalize their ancestral language across their territories. In Chapter Two participants explained that they are motivated by a sense of responsibility to creation, to their ancestors, and to future generations, and because they believe that the language will bring healing and restoration to individuals, families, and communities. Chapter Three reviewed their efforts to develop Anishinaabemowin as a second language (ASL) pedagogies and programs. Chapter Four analyzed this emerging AR movement's effectiveness, through participants' individual efforts, to simultaneously promote their cause and recruit other Anishinaabeg. Chapter Five examined participants' varying perceptions of politics but found a consensus regarding Anishinaabemowin's importance for maintaining both a strong collective and individual identity for Anishinaabeg. Finally, the emerging AR movement is not waiting for governments to act. AR participants are building a

⁴⁰⁵ Joseph Marshall III, *The Journey of Crazy Horse: A Lakota History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 193.

movement that is self-determining the revitalization of Anishinaabemowin for themselves, their families, and their people. In this final chapter, I will review the relevant literature to return to the core themes of governance and language and how they intersect in pursuit of Anishinaabe self-determination. I will end with a few thoughts on potential AR allies and directions for future research.

There is a widespread consensus among Indigenous intellectual, political and spiritual leaders that Indigenous languages need to be maintained or revitalized because they are integral to decolonization and self-determination. Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle connect Indigenous language maintenance and revitalization to governance.

Language is the first glue that links peoples together, and the major emphasis in self-determination and ultimately in self-government should be the preservation of language where it still exists and the cultivation of it where it has eroded or fallen into disuse... Finally language can help to remind people working in Indian-created institutions of the heritage they possess. The nuances of meaning that the old traditions contain and the sacredness of experience can both be expressed in the native language in more comprehensible terms for tribe members than in English. Language is the key to cultural survival and cannot be considered in isolation; it is and must be the substance of self-determination.⁴⁰⁶

Canadian political institutions generally ignore Indigenous languages and, historically, actively sought their destruction through its residential school policy. Canada's failure to support Indigenous languages is additional proof of the need for Indigenous self-determination and the establishment of a language policy that protects and promotes Indigenous languages. Taiaiake Alfred identifies four basic objectives for Indigenous governance, one of which calls specifically for the reintegration of Indigenous languages:

⁴⁰⁶ Vine Jr. Deloria and Clifford Lytle, *The Nations Within – The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 251.

*Native languages embody indigenous peoples' identity and are the most important element in their culture. They must be revived and protected as both symbols and sources of nationhood...In addition, communities must make teaching the Native language, to both adults and children, a top priority.*⁴⁰⁷

Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows also emphasizes that Indigenous peoples must maintain and revitalize their cultural knowledge. He provides a specific example of how returning to Anishinaabemowin decolonizes our thoughts and reveals alternatives to Canada's colonial political structures.

*For example, the very word by which many Algonkian speaking people describe themselves is Anishinabe. Anishinabe quite literally means good man. Similarly, if you were describing a female from our community, you would say Anishinabequae, which literally means good woman. I find it extremely significant that teachings are implanted in our language to tell us what we should be: good. The label we have for ourselves should always remind us that goodness lies at the heart of being a man or woman. We would find great benefits if we would describe ourselves more frequently and consistently by the words for ourselves that are drawn from our languages. Thus, goodness can be related to language revitalization. If we revitalized Indigenous languages this would loosen the Indian Act's hold.*⁴⁰⁸

Borrows illustrates how choosing to define ourselves with our own terms undermines the *Indian Act* and replaces it with Anishinaabe values.

*I want to be Anishinabe, not Indian. Choosing to be identified in our languages can diminish the Indian Act to a significant extent. When we determine how we will best identify ourselves that action creates a core precept around which further growth flows. When our identity is tied to being good we are at that moment firmly on the path to ditching the Indian Act.*⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace Power Righteousness - An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1999), 136.

⁴⁰⁸ Borrows, *Seven Generations, Seven Teachings*, 10.

⁴⁰⁹ Borrows, *Seven Generations, Seven Teachings*, 10-11.

Anishinaabe philosopher Dale Turner also notes this property of language to “secure a sense of belonging” among speakers.⁴¹⁰ Borrows suggests that cultural revitalization projects can re-establish that sense of solidarity among Anishinaabeg through “activity-based” participation.

This idea of citizenship places a greater emphasis on cooperation, self-restraint, and public spiritedness outside the formal bonds of the state. It encourages and celebrates those who are willing to freely engage or defer their own self-interest for the good of others, without being compelled to do so. This activity-based form of citizenship has been described as a ‘need’: a moral obligation to concern and associate ourselves with the perils and problems of ‘strangers’ in our society. This view of citizenship suggests that if people passively rely on the state for their entitlements and status, and do not contribute in some other way, the bonds of community upon which a state depends can weaken or be forever broken. To counter this danger, an activity-based citizenship requires some kind of social space that permits people to freely come together for their own purposes and to pursue goals that may not be officially pursued by the state.⁴¹¹

Despite the potential solidarity-building of non-state cultural revitalization efforts, Borrows obliges Canada and Canadians to support Indigenous languages. He argues that Indigenous peoples would be less wary of Canadian citizenship if they were not afraid “that the survival of their languages, cultures, and distinctive practices is threatened, [then] they may become more willing to embrace their relationships with others in this country.”⁴¹² Borrows concludes, “the self is best governed through principles such as *Nbwaakaawin* (wisdom), *Zaagidwin* (love), *Mnaadendimowin* (respect), *Aakwade’ewin* (bravery), *Dbaadendiziwin* (humility) *Gwekwaadiziwin* (honesty), and *Debwewin* (truth).”

⁴¹⁰ Dale A. Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 46.

⁴¹¹ John Borrows, *Recovering Canada - The Resurgence of Indigenous Law* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 142.

⁴¹² Borrows, *Recovering Canada*, 157.

Governance is best organized around these principles of goodness because goodness is the foundation for governance. The ability to learn our languages, follow our teachings and apply their best elements has the potential to be the most powerful factor in the Indian Act's demise. The authority to bring about this change lies within us. We only have to grasp our most fundamental teachings and notice how they are lived by good people in our communities to start along this path. If we could get our communities agreeing about how to get rid of the Indian Act, based on even a fraction of this paper's suggestions, then maybe other levels of government would have to listen. And even if they didn't listen, and we ourselves lived these principles, we might eventually realize that we were governing ourselves in matters most important to our future happiness. In that moment the Indian Act will be extinguished because we no longer give it power over our lives and communities.⁴¹³

To avoid replicating Canada's oppressive forms of governance, it is also crucial that decolonization occur in the plural so that we speak of decolonizing projects. Such projects can and should take many forms. The peoplehood matrix identifies four fields in which Indigenous peoples should organize: ceremonies, land, language, and sacred history. A reductionist approach that hinges Indigenous survival on a single tap-root is unnecessary and potentially harmful. For example, Cree scholar Verna St. Denis describes how we can actually obscure the way colonization marginalizes and oppresses Indigenous peoples if we become fixated on cultural revitalization as the only solution.

A cultural discourse has assumed a level of sacredness and/or orthodoxy for explaining the social and educational conditions of Aboriginal people in Canada, so much so that other explanations for the on-going marginalization, exclusion, and oppression of Aboriginal people are denied and minimized. It is possible that seeing a strategy of cultural revitalization as a form of fundamentalism can help to dislodge the supremacy of such discourses in explaining both the conditions and solutions for the inequality that marks so many Aboriginal communities. Perhaps cultural revitalization misdiagnoses the problem and places far too much responsibility on the marginalized and oppressed to change yet again, and once again, lets

⁴¹³ Borrows, *Seven Generations, Seven Teachings*, 31-32.

*those in positions of dominance off the hook.*⁴¹⁴

Seneca scholar John Mohawk has also warned of revitalization movement's potential to become intolerant and oppressive. "Revitalization movements, whether religious or secular in inspiration, tend to incorporate a form of idealism that is intolerant of those who do not share the group's beliefs or identity. Tolerance – the willingness to accept that there may be other ways of being in the world that are different from but no less legitimate than one's own – cannot coexist with this view, since legitimizing those seen as 'other' destroys the exclusive legitimacy of the movement and the privileged identity of its followers."⁴¹⁵

Mohawk notes that nostalgia for an idealized past can fail to distinguish what is imagined and what is real.

*We find revival movements in which the group seeks to reconstruct itself in a cherished image of the past. As much a product of imagination as history, the image idealizes the lives and privileges of glorified ancestors and claims that they lived a kind of utopian existence. The group seeks to identify with those things deemed positive and desirable in their contemporary existence – an existence under real or perceived stress – and to eliminate impediments to a better life while emulating behaviors and values of their ancestors. Their hopes of achieving a more successful culture are often unrealistic not only because of incorrect or incomplete information about the actual lived experiences of their ancestors but also because their own culture has imported values and other elements of culture from foreigners – often the people responsible for the stress. The introduction of these elements is usually unintentional and unconscious and therefore largely invisible to reformers.*⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ Verna St. Denis, "Real Indians: Cultural Revitalization and Fundamentalism in Aboriginal Education," in *Contesting Fundamentalisms*, 35-47 (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 2004), 45.

⁴¹⁵ John C. Mohawk, *Utopian Legacies - A History of Conquest and Oppression in the Western World* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 2000), 265.

⁴¹⁶ Mohawk, *Utopian Legacies*, 6.

I believe that language revitalization may be more reliable as a revitalizing resource than more ambiguous aspects of culture. Language can be tested in the sense that it must pass a test of mutual intelligibility. Although language is constantly changing, it has a core resilience that could keep a revitalization movement grounded in an authentic instead of an imagined past.

Mohawk reveals that revitalization has both creative and destructive potential in Indigenous communities. Its revitalization could potentially limit intolerant tendencies by grounding decolonizing movements in Anishinaabe values that are embedded in Anishinaabemowin. The examples provided by participants in Chapter Five suggest this possibility. However, Deloria and Lytle provide an example of language's destructive potential upon community cohesion, particularly for non-speakers. The shaming power of Indigenous languages is widely understood at the community level and this power is contested between fluent "traditionals" and modern non-speakers who are less secure in their identity.

Traditionals knew the tribal language extremely well. Even in 1960 there were many who had only a smattering of English and preferred to use the native tongue when speaking at community and tribal meetings. Traditional people knew that language was a powerful political weapon in a public forum, and they frequently used it with great effectiveness, cowing helpless opponents who knew few words. There is nothing as embarrassing as being ridiculed in a language a person barely understands, and no astute tribal politician would dare confront a traditional who could bring such evidence of real Indianness to bear.⁴¹⁷

The issue of how to motivate non-speakers without attacking their identity is a delicate balance. In order to value the language, many adopt essentialist positions that you are only Indigenous if you speak an Indigenous language.

⁴¹⁷ Deloria and Lytle, *The Nations Within*, 233.

However, such an approach ignores how colonization deliberately targeted Indigenous languages and deprived generations of Indigenous peoples the opportunity to learn them. However, this dissertation has shown that it is possible to reverse this process and recover our languages as individuals and as peoples. But this requires sacrifice. Both the language essentialists and the language deniers would be better served by acknowledging colonization's damage and working collectively for Anishinaabe resurgence.

There is a role for non-fluent speakers in AR because fluency is not necessarily required to restore intergenerational transmission or to be an Indigenous language activist. "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."⁴¹⁸ Flocken concurs, "I do have the right to fight for my language... Do not feel bad if you were not born with the language – that is not your fault. Anyone can fight for the language even if they know only two or three words."⁴¹⁹

*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.*⁴²⁰

Indigenous Leadership For Language Revitalization

As introduced in Chapter One, language scholars have also connected sound leadership to successful revitalization. Linguists Grenoble and Whaley warn that

⁴¹⁸ Darrell R. Kipp, *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, 2000), 14.

⁴¹⁹ Henry Flocken, "Anishinaabe Sovereignty and the Ojibwe Language," *Oshkaabewis Native Journal* 3, no. 1 (1996), 12.

⁴²⁰ Flocken, "Anishinaabe Sovereignty and the Ojibwe Language," 18-19.

“an honest evaluation of most language revitalization efforts to date will show that they have failed.”⁴²¹ However, they emphasize successes and identify what they believe is the crucial ingredient to successful language revitalization: devoted, community-based leadership. The community must “take ownership of the effort and construct the revitalization program which suits their own ambitions, needs, and resources.”⁴²² Crawford also identifies leadership as the key variable in order to successfully revitalize Indigenous languages. “[Aboriginal leadership is necessary to] develop our brain trust; to facilitate communication among activists through publications and the Internet, as well as conferences; to compile resource guides and how-to-manuals that share practical experiences, featuring failures and successes; to train...linguists and educators; to build alliances with sympathetic outsiders; and of course, to encourage talented and committed people to get involved.”⁴²³ Language revitalization is an area of activism and research that has followed the emergence of the international Indigenous movement of cultural revitalization.⁴²⁴

⁴²¹ Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley, *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), ix.

⁴²² Grenoble and Whaley, *Saving Languages*, x.

⁴²³ James Crawford, *At War With Diversity: US Language Policy in an Age of Anxiety* (Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2000), 82.

⁴²⁴ Since the 1970s, many Indigenous communities have recognized the need to stem the tide of English, French and other colonizing languages that are threatening to drown out their languages. Although language loss is a global phenomenon, my review of the relevant academic literature focuses on languages indigenous to North America as well as the language projects of the Maori and Kanaka Maoli who have led the way in innovating language nests and immersion schooling in Indigenous languages. In terms of Indigenous education, the most prolific success story is that of the Maori's establishment of a three-stage education system from preschool to university: kohanga reo – kura kaupapa – whare wananga. Indigenous Hawaiians imported the kohanga reo (language nest or immersion preschools) to begin the aha punana leo movement in Hawai'i. The success of the Hawai'iian revitalization has been exported to the

Effective leaders must be able to facilitate the setting of common goals that have community support. This is a crucial first step that is repeated in the literature and also frequently stated in the interviews. Fishman, as discussed in Chapter Four, refers to this process as prior ideological clarification. There is evidence of broad Indigenous support for language maintenance and revitalization but what is less clear is what they are able and willing to do to achieve these goals.⁴²⁵ Mohawk explains why goal-setting can become a divisive process in his history of revitalization movements.

*True idealists face an insurmountable dilemma. They may not compromise their ideals or they betray the very concept that frames their identity. They may not negotiate their articles of belief with nonbelievers, because the beliefs of idealists are absolute and not negotiable. Since the beliefs represent perfection, agreeing to something else by definition not perfect betrays the ideal itself.*⁴²⁶

It is doubtful that all Indigenous communities will agree on similar language revitalization end goals so it is more accurate to speak of a range of objectives for Indigenous language revitalization. Many Indigenous communities may have only modest ambitions. For example, Bonita Lawrence notes in her

continental USA and has spread throughout North America. Jeffrey Sissons, *First Peoples - Indigenous Cultures and Their Futures* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 78.

⁴²⁵ Norris and Jantzen, "From Generation to Generation: Survival and Maintenance of Aboriginal Languages Within Families, Communities and Cities," Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) surveys the current state of Indigenous language use and announced that, despite the continuing decline of Indigenous language use across Canada, 90% of Indigenous peoples surveyed want to (re)learn their ancestral languages including 75% of those living in urban areas. Unfortunately, the INAC study results provide us with no indication of the sacrifices that Indigenous people living in urban areas would be willing to make in order to maintain or revitalize their languages because its abstract question makes it unlikely that anyone would reply negatively to the opportunity to acquire a new language. However, this high level of support for Indigenous language maintenance gives hope that there exists widespread Indigenous interest for language programming.

⁴²⁶ Mohawk, *Utopian Legacies*, 156.

study of the urban Aboriginal community of Toronto that many are satisfied with symbolic language use.

Individuals described how they sporadically attended language classes and stopped after learning only a few phrases, generally enough to allow them to identify themselves in traditional terms. This approach to traditional values is highly individualistic, enabling individuals to adopt the trappings that can help them to create an Indian identity for themselves while ignoring the much more daunting (but necessary) task of attempting to learn the cultural world-view encoded in their language – which is vital to any deeper understanding of what it means to be a member of an Indigenous culture, rather than simply an Indian.⁴²⁷

As Lawrence illustrates, some Indigenous people seem content to dabble in their ancestral languages rather than commit to fluency or even proficiency. At the opposite end are those who will settle for nothing less than the full restoration of the language in all language domains. Creating and sustaining successful language revitalization programs requires good leadership to facilitate, measure, and organize community support. Two Indigenous scholars exemplify these leadership qualities. Both have written exceptionally accessible guides, based on their own first-hand experiences in community-based immersion language revitalization, for others wishing to develop their own programs: Dakota scholar and language activist Angela Waziyatawin Wilson and Blackfeet educator Darrell Kipp. Waziyatawin explicitly challenges readers to ask themselves, “Why is language important?”⁴²⁸ She encourages thoughtful consideration of language revitalization’s expected benefits and end goals.

⁴²⁷ Bonita Lawrence, *'Real' Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2004), 167.

⁴²⁸ Waziyatawin, "Defying Colonization Through Language Survival," in *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 119-120.

Waziyatawin offers several possible models that range from introductory second language courses to immersion intentional communities designed to produce fluent speakers. Waziyatawin is also a contributor to Kipp's influential *Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned From Native Language Activists Developing their own Tribal Language Programs*. Its summary succinctly states the required rules for realizing revitalization:

*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.*⁴²⁹

The Blackfeet program established by Kipp flourished but had the funding cut and the tribal council refused to support the program. In 1987, the school had to strike out on its own and Kipp described their new organizing principles as “pure-form anarchist. You don't reform, you abandon bad systems.”⁴³⁰ Kipp explained his anarchist approach to language revitalization: conserve your strength by focussing on those who do want to learn; maintain financial transparency and independence from tribal government; and protect yourself from politicians who seek to control the program and destabilize it. “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.”⁴³¹ Kipp emphasizes the importance of planning and contingency planning and advises

⁴²⁹ Kipp, *Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned*, 1.

⁴³⁰ Kipp, *Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned*, 23.

⁴³¹ Kipp, *Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned*, 6.

preparing a transition management team that endorses students eventually take over as teachers and administrators.⁴³²

Reviewing the language revitalization literature instills confidence that restoring intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages is achievable. The following section profiles the most devoted self-determining Indigenous language revitalization projects that involved the creation of distinct, intentional communities to restore intergenerational transmission. If we are to implement these models, it is important to act quickly. Maintaining a language, by ensuring that each new generation learn it as their first language, is much easier than revitalizing one that is already disappearing.⁴³³

Establish Intentional Indigenous Language Communities

Waziyatawin advocates re-organizing traditionally-organized communal societies in her most recent writing on language revitalization. She explains, “such traditionally arranged communities would have a much more viable chance of completely reviving our languages and spirituality...[because] the diaspora of our people has inhibited the success of individual community efforts and our language continues to die.”⁴³⁴ These are in many respects the most ambitious language projects because they demand a complete transformation of lifestyle from their participants. Two examples include Smallboy’s Camp, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta, and Kanatsiohareke, a Mohawk community in New York state. Both camps were founded for the purpose of restoring a

⁴³² Kipp, *Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned*, 20, 30.

⁴³³ Grenoble and Whaley, *Saving Languages*, 13.

⁴³⁴ Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, 2008), 157.

traditional lifestyle away from modern influences that were deemed corrupting. The restoration of Indigenous languages has been paramount in both instances.

Smallboy's Camp was founded by Chief Bobtail Smallboy in 1968. Chief Smallboy, of Anishinaabe and Cree descent, was a venerated oral historian of his people who grew up in one of the last free nomadic bands on the northern plains. Throughout his life, Smallboy never spoke English and challenged those around him to speak Cree. "His utter refusal to communicate in the Queen's or any other form of English came to be regarded as a symbol of his personal power, and this won him widespread respect, even from the most educated Indians on the reserve."⁴³⁵ Despite his individual success as a farmer on the reserve and his election as band council chief, Smallboy recognized that the reserve system was destroying his community. He resented Canadian education for confusing and harming Indigenous children by alienating them from their families and communities. Smallboy blamed television for disrupting both intergenerational respect and the intergenerational transmission of Cree culture and language and deplored the sense of inferiority that infected so many Indigenous people.

*'We have lost our identity,' he said reproachfully. 'We felt disgraced by our Indianness. In public we were ashamed to use our language. Although our physical appearance told of our Indianness, we were persistent in our desire to become like the white man.'*⁴³⁶

In defiance of the Canadian government, Smallboy led a group of 140 disaffected Ermineskin band members away from the reserve system in order to

⁴³⁵ Gary Botting, *Chief Smallboy - In Pursuit of Freedom* (Calgary, AB: Fifth House, 2005), 128.

⁴³⁶ Botting, *Chief Smallboy*, 126.

revitalize traditional Cree values in the Alberta foothills. Smallboy was not inventing a way of life for his people when he established the Camp. The Camp was the resumption of the way he was raised.

*In fact, Smallboy was motivated more by memories of the freewheeling days of his youth than by any sophisticated political theory. To him, what he was doing was common sense, a simple means of protecting the Cree culture that he saw was under attack by the dominating culture, which itself was spinning out of control. He saw a need to cocoon, to withdraw to a quiet place from the bombardment of television.*⁴³⁷

Chief Smallboy's main focus was on the revitalization of the Cree language in his camp because he believed that its instruction would also instil Cree values. For example, he blamed materialism as the greatest harm instilled in Canadian education and pointedly asked, "How can an Indian follow the white man's paths, even when he knows that his children are being ruined, even though his children are unable anymore to talk the language of the Indian?"⁴³⁸

Others have made similar attempts to establish intentional communities focussed on cultural revitalization. Tom Porter is one of the Mohawk organizers of an intentional community started in 1993 when land was purchased near Fonda, New York.

Today their community flourishes with over five acres of their traditional corn, 38 acres of hay, extensive gardens, fruit bushes, various trees,

⁴³⁷ Botting, *Chief Smallboy*, 140. Despite its successful cultural revitalization, Smallboy's Camp struggled to meet subsistence needs (173-174). The Camp remained dependent on federal social assistance for its members but also sought wage labour. One such project involved clearing an area under claim by the local Stoney band for the province's Bighorn Dam. The participation of Smallboy's Camp members triggered a Stoney request for the Cree to leave their original camp site (144-148). This incident illustrates the complexity of disengaging from colonization and how easily an anti-oppressive movement can be coopted into oppressing someone else. Upon Smallboy's death in 1984, factions developed under his son's leadership and then exploded in 1995. Today, the Camp's future is again in doubt.

⁴³⁸ Botting, *Chief Smallboy*, 194.

*including maples for syrup-making, and sweet grass. They run a bed and breakfast, offer lectures, workshops, and classes, as well as serve as a conference site and gathering place for various events including Mohawk immersion classes, spiritual gatherings, and art festivals (for both Mohawk and non-Mohawk populations). They are attempting to undo the damage wrought to Indigenous communities under colonial rule and restore health and well-being to the Mohawk nation.*⁴³⁹

These two examples of Smallboy's Camp and Kanatsiohareke show that it is possible for Indigenous peoples to break away from the *Indian Act*.

Is there potential for intentional language communities to be established in an urban context? John Borrows challenges Anishinaabeg who live off-reserve to "shoulder some of this responsibility" for cultural maintenance because "the burden of cultural transmission has been borne by reservation-based teachers and leaders."⁴⁴⁰ One of the research participants also spoke about the necessity of radically reorganizing our lives to support AR. Ningewance Nadeau believed that making the language sustainable in urban areas requires that Anishinaabeg live close together to increase opportunities to hear and speak Anishinaabemowin.

*We would have to have a village of our own. I think we would have to be physically together, speak the language to make it a lifestyle. We can't be like the, let's say Chinese who can live in a neighbourhood like this and be totally surrounded by white people and still speak their language. Of course they still have TV stations that they can listen to and still hear their language... We would have to organize to do that. We would have to buy houses close to each other and have a common little area right in the middle where people could meet each other, where the children could learn it. You would just have to have a native language community in the city.*⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁹ Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, 2008), 155-156.

⁴⁴⁰ Borrows, *Recovering Canada*, 140.

⁴⁴¹ Ningewance Nadeau, interview.

On a smaller scale, this type of organizing is already happening. Political scientist Jim Silver has identified a “distinctive form of urban Aboriginal community development” that he argues promotes Indigenous cultural revitalization as “a central part of a holistic approach to urban Aboriginal community development.”

Many urban Aboriginal people have been badly damaged by colonization. They are lacking in self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of self-worth – the result of having internalized the colonial ideology – and are in need of healing. The healing has begun at an individual level – community development is not possible without strong and healthy communities. Stronger urban Aboriginal communities are being created by Aboriginal people themselves, through a wide-ranging network of urban Aboriginal organizations painstakingly created over the past thirty years.⁴⁴²

Silver’s study reveals that Indigenous peoples are already organizing for decolonization. Language revitalization is an additional, and to this point, a largely unexplored pathway for urban decolonization activism.

I have also been influenced by the Cree and Mohawk examples of intentional communities focused on revitalizing Indigenous languages. I will offer one possibility that would involve the establishment of an intentional community designed for community engagement and cultural revitalization. My long-term goal is to help establish urban language nests for Anishinaabeg children. An interim measure would be to organize Anishinaabeg adults around the importance of language and to create a network of committed and skilled activists. This possibility is inspired by Maori and Kanaka Maoli revitalization projects that used “language nests” or language-immersion preschools for their

⁴⁴² Jim Silver, et al., *In Their Own Voices - Building Urban Aboriginal Communities* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2006), 30-31.

children. Smith cites the language nest movement as one of the three most crucial components of the Maori resurgence since the 1960s.

*Te Kohanga Reo...was built on the more fundamental unit of whanau or extended family...[and] did not depend on iwi [tribal] structures for its credibility or financial support. Te Kohanga Reo...encouraged autonomy amongst its individual units. A consequence of such autonomy is that there was space for whanau to solve problems for themselves and this process generated a wide range of activities, one of which was information gathering. It was also a process which committed parents to thinking far more seriously about education and the relationship between schooling and society.*⁴⁴³

Canada's census data has shown that Anishinaabeg have higher rates of urban residency than other Indigenous peoples. This has implications for language revitalization because urbanization has been shown to adversely affect the retention of Indigenous languages. The continuity index measurements for Anishinaabemowin speakers have been dropping from 55 in 1996 to 45 in 2001. This measurement indicates that only 45% of those who speak Anishinaabemowin as their first language (mother tongue) use it as the primary language in the home (home language).⁴⁴⁴ Mobilizing Anishinaabeg to create urban spaces of refuge for their language is increasingly important as Anishinaabeg urbanize and language continuity decreases.

Identifying Potential Allies for Indigenous Language Revitalization

There are intriguing parallels between Indigenous language revitalization movements and other social movements. In terms of general support for culture and language programming, there would appear to be opportunities to work with

⁴⁴³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999), 163.

⁴⁴⁴ Norris and Jantzen, "From Generation to Generation: Survival and Maintenance of Aboriginal Languages Within Families, Communities and Cities," 95, 116.

Heritage Language groups that offer classes to maintain immigrant languages such as German, Japanese, Spanish, and Ukrainian. However, this was never raised during the interviews and suggests a tendency for Indigenous peoples to see their relationship to Canadians not as fellow citizens but rather as foreigners. One telling example was the Assembly of First Nations' decision to oppose a government proposal to add Indigenous languages to legislation to establish a Heritage Language Institute. "First Nations opposed their inclusion in Bill C-37 on the grounds that First Nations languages cannot be relegated to the status of minority languages. Instead, they have a unique position as the languages of the founding nations of Canada and as treaty signatories that must be reflected in separate provisions for their protection and maintenance."⁴⁴⁵ The obvious flaw in that reasoning is that, 20 years later, there has been no such legislation and an opportunity was missed to access resources for Indigenous language maintenance. Responsibility for supporting Indigenous languages was directed to Canada's government, particularly the federal government, but little mention was made of what Canadians could do to support AR aside from one participant who appealed to Canadians to lobby their governments to support Indigenous languages.

Another example of a potential ally for Indigenous language movements is the environmental movement. Concerns over dwindling linguistic diversity parallel the arguments of environmentalist advocates of biodiversity.⁴⁴⁶ Ecolinguists argue that each language contains distinct knowledge and

⁴⁴⁵ Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, *Report*, 41.

⁴⁴⁶ Abley, *Spoken Here*, 199.

worldviews that are embedded within that language. It follows that the loss of any language therefore “diminishes the adaptational strength of our species because it lowers the pool of knowledge from which we can draw.”⁴⁴⁷

Chamberlain and other scholars use this ecological analogy to demand “different languages should be nourished the way rare species are, by protecting their habitat. Doing this would mean protecting the land and livelihood of the people who speak such languages.”⁴⁴⁸

Language scholars Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine advocate cooperating with the environmental movement in order to support the halting/slowing down of destructive development in order to preserve biological/linguistic habitats.⁴⁴⁹ However, they argue that “good” development can occur, resulting in both cultural and economic benefits.

We would not therefore support measures to preserve a language which consigned its people to economic disadvantage and political marginality. Fortunately, as we shall show, there is not such conflict. The measures most likely to preserve small languages are the very ones which will help increase their speakers’ standard of living in a long-term sustainable way. This is because assumptions about development have been shown, over the last three decades, to be wrong.”⁴⁵⁰

Nettle and Romaine instead advocate new approaches to development that are both pluralist and sustainable.

If the triple goals of rural development, sustainability, and cultural-linguistic pluralism are to be pursued, then forms of decision making both above

⁴⁴⁷ Sue Wright, *Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalisation* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 221.

⁴⁴⁸ J. Edward Chamberlain, *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories? Finding Common Ground* (Toronto: A.A. Knopf Canada, 2003), 15-16.

⁴⁴⁹ Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 200, 203.

⁴⁵⁰ Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 156.

*and below the existing nation-state will have to be developed. This will be a major challenge for the twenty-first century. However...we believe that they would be good for languages, good for the environment, and good for people.*⁴⁵¹

Anishinaabe-kwe Winona LaDuke has also written on this connection between land and language and equates biological diversity with cultural 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.”⁴⁵²

Further Research and Final Thoughts

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the revitalizing of Anishinaabemowin in Manitoba and Ontario, in order to better understand Anishinaabe methods, motivations, and mobilization strategies as well as how this emerging movement contributes to broader political goals such as self-determination. There is much left to explore. The parameters of this study excluded approximately 17% of the Anishinaabe population who reside outside of these two provinces. Indeed, as the literature review showed, much of the revitalization activity is occurring in Anishinaabe communities in the United States where the language has suffered the greatest decline. More research is also required on the effectiveness of immersion programs that have been established for children on various reserves and reservations.

⁴⁵¹ Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 175.

⁴⁵² Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999), 1.

If I could change one aspect of this research project it is that I am not yet a proficient speaker of Anishinaabemowin. This has placed me at a disadvantage in many respects when it comes to this topic. I would have loved to be able to conduct the interviews in Anishinaabemowin. I wonder how the fluent participants might have expressed themselves differently if I were a fluent speaker and I wonder what Anishinaabemowin-based metaphors might have shaped this dissertation's design. If I were to have one wish for further research, it would be that a proficient speaker (preferably me someday soon!) could embark on the same research trajectory of studying the intersection of language and politics for Anishinaabeg but entirely in Anishinaabemowin. I am so very grateful to the fluent participants who participated and provided this interpretation for me. Without them, I would have found myself left alone on the wrong side of the linguistic divide and this study would have suffered greatly as a result.

Indigenous language revitalization is a process of reclaiming, remembering and restoring a crucial aspect of peoplehood. The primary objective of this language movement is restoring Indigenous languages to their rightful place in our homes, schools, and communities. A self-determining approach to Indigenous language revitalization rejects dependency on the Canadian state and instead seeks self-sufficiency. The majority of Indigenous communities already have the essential resources for language revitalization: fluent speakers and potential learners.

Anishinaabeg must not live with false hope that governments will supply the solution to language loss. They cannot. Anishinaabemowin will only be

maintained if speakers and potential learners work together to ensure its intergenerational transmission. Breaking the psychological dependency on government is a crucial step towards true Anishinaabe resurgence.

Language loss is an effect of colonization, not its cause. Therefore, language revitalization should not be considered colonization's cure for Indigenous peoples. However, language provides a sense of community and rootedness that can sustain and unite us as unique peoples. The analogy of language as a root in the peoplehood matrix is a revealing metaphor for its value to Anishinaabeg. Language is a root that grounds us and connects us to our ceremonies, land, and to our history. Roots can also be medicinal and the language tap-root may mitigate some of colonization's most destructive effects, and perhaps, support the restoration of *mno-bmaadiziwin* (good life) for Anishinaabe people.

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Appendix A - Information Letter

Boozhoo! My name is Brock Pitawanakwat. I am Anishinaabe and my First Nation is Whitefish River in Ontario. I am a doctoral student in the Indigenous Governance Programs at University of Victoria, British Columbia. In partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree, I am undertaking qualitative research on urban Indigenous language revitalization initiatives. My study is called **Anishinaabe Urban Language Revitalization and Indigenous Self-Determination**. Its purpose is to describe efforts by Anishinaabeg to maintain and revitalize our ancestral language in cities throughout our territory.

I would be honoured if you would participate in my research by agreeing to an interview with me. I will strive to conduct this research project in a manner that is respectful and appropriate to Anishinaabe ways. The research methods will be individual or group interviews with Anishinaabe language activists and scholars who have worked with urban Anishinaabe communities. The research will seek to address the following question: **How are Anishinaabeg organizing to maintain and revitalize Anishinaabemowin in Canadian cities?** I have a series of follow-up questions that relate to and expand upon this central question in order to develop a better understanding of what we are already doing and what we can do to support the language and its use among our people. Each interview is expected to take approximately one hour and will be at a time and location that is convenient to both of us. I will be video recording our discussion in order to ensure that an accurate transcription can be made following the interview.

The research results will be used for my doctoral dissertation and may be published as an article in a scholarly journal, a book, or presented at a conference. Other possible multimedia may include a video presentation or an Internet website to promote Anishinaabemowin revitalization.

Miigwech for taking the time to consider participating in this study. Once again, I would be honoured to speak with you about your work with Anishinaabemowin. I will be contacting you in the next few weeks to determine your interest in participating. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me should you have any further questions.

Brock Pitawanakwat BA, MA, (PhD A.B.D.)

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Regina, SK

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Phone: (306) 596-6514, Cell, or (306) 790-5950 extension 3211, Work

Please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, if you have any questions I cannot answer either now or at any time in the research process. His contact information is:

Dr. Taiaiake Alfred,
Director Indigenous Governance Programs
University of Victoria
Faculty of Human and Social Development
PO Box 1700 STN CSC
Victoria BC
V8W 2Y2
Email: igov@uvic.ca
Phone: (250) 721-6438

Appendix B – Participant Consent Form

Brock Pitawanakwat
PhD candidate in Indigenous
Governance
University of Victoria

Participant Consent Form

Anishinaabe Urban Language Revitalization and Indigenous Self-Determination.

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled **Anishinaabe Urban Language Revitalization and Indigenous Self-Determination** that is being conducted by me, Brock Pitawanakwat. I am Anishinaabe from the Whitefish River First Nation and a doctoral candidate in the Indigenous Governance Programs at the University of Victoria. You may contact me if you have further questions by email brockpit@uvic.ca or telephone (306) 596-6514.

As a doctoral candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Indigenous Governance. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Taiaiake Alfred. You may contact my supervisor at (250) 721-6438.

The purpose of this research project is to seek out and describe efforts by Anishinaabeg to maintain and revitalize our ancestral language in cities throughout our territory. This research is important to understand and promote adult Indigenous language teaching and learning in urban areas. This research will identify how the existing Anishinaabemowin revitalization movement resists cultural and linguistic assimilation in Canadian cities. It will also explore ways in which Anishinaabemowin urban language projects constitute an existing or potential contribution to an urban Indigenous social movement and derive useful lessons and models that can be disseminated throughout Anishinaabe-aki (the territory of the Anishinaabeg).

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your work with Anishinaabemowin and its revitalization in urban areas. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include an interview lasting approximately one hour at a location and time convenient to both of us. The questions will relate to your experience in urban Anishinaabemowin revitalization.

Participating in this study will cause no known or anticipated inconveniences or risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research is to support your and others' efforts to restore the

cultural and linguistic integrity of Anishinaabeg in urban areas. Societal benefits may include that other Indigenous and minority language projects may learn from Anishinaabemowin revitalization. The research will also further our understanding of Indigenous urban social movements.

In keeping with Anishinaabe protocol, I will be giving cloth and tobacco to honour the gifts you will be providing me by agreeing to share your experience and wisdom. It is important for you to know that it is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants and, if you agree to be a participant in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. If you would not otherwise choose to participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may still decline to answer any question and may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study before its conclusion in June 2009, your data will not be used in the dissertation or its subsequent dissemination.

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as a faculty member with the Aboriginal Governance program at the University of Winnipeg. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following step to prevent coercion has been taken: I will not conduct interviews with current students.

This research may lead to an educational/non-commercial product or service. The nature of this product or service is to enhance our collective understanding of Anishinaabemowin revitalization in order to promote its continued use for ourselves and future generations of Anishinaabeg.

The relatively small number of Anishinaabe language activists and scholars means that I cannot guarantee that your identity will remain unknown. Therefore, I am requesting that your name be associated with the information you share with me during the interview. However if you wish to maintain your anonymity, neither your name nor any other personal identifying information will be used in the dissertation, unless you provide permission for me to do so.

All raw data will remain confidential and will be stored in a secure location. Raw data of the transcripts and the video recordings will remain in my possession for the duration of the research project. Only my supervisory committee at the University of Victoria and I will have access to the interview transcripts and the original video recordings. After completing the written transcription, I will immediately send you a copy for you to review. If you identify changes or corrections that need to be made, please notify me within four weeks of receiving the transcripts so that I can make the necessary corrections before I begin my

analysis. The collected data will be used for my dissertation with participants given the opportunity to review and make changes to their interview transcripts. A video compilation of the interviews will also be created and will be made available to Anishinaabe communities and language revitalization organizations. It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: directly to participants (dissertation & DVD), dissertation, presentations at scholarly meetings, published articles or books, internet, media, and directly to Anishinaabe communities and Indigenous language organizations. Once the research project is complete, the video interviews will be archived with a regional or university archive. Data from this study will not be destroyed unless you request this, in writing, prior to the study's completion in June 2009. If you wish to withdraw your participation and have your data destroyed, please inform me, in writing, so that I can do so prior to disseminating the research results.

In addition to being able to contact me, Brock Pitawanakwat, and my supervisor, Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250)-472-4545.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix D – Interview Questions

The following list of questions will be used in the initial interviews. Depending on the initial responses, these questions may be modified or others may be added to ensure that the collected data are relevant to the guiding research questions. I will ask each question only if the respondent has not spontaneously provided the information in answer to an earlier question. My goal is to listen respectfully and I will ask supplementary questions to further pursue interesting information and ideas which emerge during the interview:

1. Please tell me about the language work you have done in your career?
2. What prompted you to do this work?
3. Would you have done things differently if you could have? How?
4. Do you believe it is important to maintain Anishinaabemowin in the city? Why?
5. How have Anishinaabeg maintained their languages as they move off-reserve into the major cities?
6. What processes and institutions have been developed to continue learning and speaking Anishinaabemowin in urban areas?
7. What are the advantages and benefits of urban-based language programs?
8. What are the challenges or obstacles to urban Anishinaabemowin revitalization?
9. What creative measures have been used to meet those challenges and overcome those obstacles?
10. How does Anishinaabemowin relate to “being Anishinaabe” in the city? In other words, how does language relate to other aspects of peoplehood such as ceremonies, history, and territory? Is it different in the city?
11. Is Anishinaabemowin revitalization political? Does it relate to self-government or self-determination? How?
12. Is there anything you would like to add?