Nene aiohétston’ nahò:ten wakweientehtà:’on tsi náhe

Onkwehonwehnéha shiwakahronkha’ónhátie’ nok shikherihonnién:ni

For what I’ve learned since I’ve been becoming a speaker and a teacher to be passed on

By

Kahrhó:wane Cory McComber

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

This project is a self-reflection of my lifelong learning of the *Kanien'kehá:ka* language *Kanien'kéha*. This self-reflection speaks to lessons learned from my early childhood experiences in learning Kanien'kéha right at the time when our last generation of Mother Tongue speakers were beginning to start what is now shaping our current language reclamation/revitalization efforts. The primary focus of this work is my language reclamation journey. This journey took place in my adult years when I began learning *Kanien'kéha*' in earnest in 1993 as a full-time volunteer in a Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten *Kanien'kéha* immersion program at the age of 18. It has continued to evolve as a father and husband, and on into what is currently the last nine consecutive years of teaching of *Kanien'kéha* to adults in a two-year immersion program setting. This work also touches upon lessons learned and solutions from my standpoint initially as a learner and later as a teacher. In describing my experience and learning, I reflect on how our language, culture and history mutually inform each other to complete the whole.

Aontakatáhsawen' Akwari'wakehrón:hahse'/For me to begin to lay the matters down for you

Tekwanonwerá:tonhs tsi nítson sewawennahnotà:ne nahò:ten wakhiatónion ne kèn:'en. Nene tóka' othé:nen wa'khiá:ton' iah tho ní:tsi í:se tehseriwaienté:ri tóka' ni ó:ia ní:ioht tsi ní:ioht tsi sa'nikonhraién:ta's, skén:nen ki' sanonhtonniónhek. Ia'teká:konte' tsi wakateweienstonhátie' oh naiá:wen'ne' waterihwató:ron enkénhake' nahò:ten enkthá:rahkwe' ne kèn:'en. Iah tewakerihwastò:se nahò:ten wakerihwaio'tátie'. Nene akonhà:'a khok wakatatatià:se nok tsi ki' ní:iore iekaníhara's nahò:ten wake'nikonhraienta'onhátie' ka' nitiawé:non tsi nitewaweiennò:ten's ne Ionkwanonhsión:ni, nok ne Onkwawén:na Kanien'kéha. Ò:ni tóka eh neniá:wen'ne' nene takaterien'tawénrie' tóka' ni ákte nenwatohetstahkwánion' tóka' ni enwakà:sen'se' keri'wanóntha' ne skén:nen ahskwenterónhake'. Hao tkatáhsawen!

Tesewatahónhtakwékhsi' ó:nen nok sewatahonhsí:iost. Ó:nen enkathró:ri' oh ní:ioht tsi onke'nikòn:róhte' ónhka nì:'i nok tsi ióhnhnhe onkwawén:na tánon' ne Onkwehonwehnéha.

I give greetings/thanks to all of you who are here to read what I have written. If anything that I have written is in a way that you don't know it to be, or, if you understand it differently, be at ease. I'm persistently studying so the what I will talk about here will be of useful benefit. I do not take the what I am working on lightly. I am only speaking on my own behalf as far as my understandings reach about where our ways have come from. As well, if it will happen that I'll make a mistake or if things will go out of order or if I should omit anything, I ask for your patience.

Let me begin.

Unstop your ears and listen closely now and I'll tell how I came to awareness of who I am and that how our language and ways are living.

Katatenà:ton/Self-Introduction

It is proper that I should give a brief understanding of who I am and where I come from; it is only a brief introduction as a fuller understanding may come from both my actual self-refection and the overall text. From this introduction you'll understand from whence my thoughts and conclusions have come and why it is of such importance that our *Kanonhsión:ni* Nations actively use our common cultural origins and values to be the common starting point to steer our language/cultural reclamation efforts in understanding what we can and what we ought not take in from settler colonial culture to further these efforts.

My name is *Kahrhó:wane* (large forest); that is my true name. I am a *Kanien'kehá:ka* (Mohawk) from *Kahnawà:ke.* I am Wolf clan. I am married. I am forty-nine years old. My wife's name is *Kanerahtóntha'* (she attaches the leaves). We are L2 speakers of *Kanien'kéha*; we have four children *Atewennà:ren* (age 22), *Yakotahúsatat* (age 20), *Lanuhsísa'ahs* (age 17) and *Tehawennáhsen* (age 9). My wife and our children are Wolf clan of the *Oneniote'á:ka/Oneida* Nation. Our children are all raised with the *Onkwehón:we* language as their primary language. They are the first in both of our families to be raised with *Onkwehonwehnéha* as their primary language since our grandparents' generation.

Tekarihwahthè:ton/Explanations

Ka'nikonhratokénstha'/it makes the mind certain: agenda

This is a self-reflection through an *Onkwehón:we*/*Kanonhsión:ni* worldview witnessing my expanding understandings, beginning with consciously knowing very little of what this means and my continuing attempts at actuating it. I say attempts as it can be difficult at times to even see how colonialization has tainted us consciously and unconsciously let alone to try and extricate one's self from its grip.

I have chosen to write my self-reflection from a *Rotinonhsión:ni* perspective, more precisely from an emic point of view –from the perspective of one who participates in the culture. I intend this style of writing to be *enkká:raton' tsi nón: nitewaké:non tsi náhe shiwakahronkha'onhátie'*/*I will tell/relate the story of where I have come from* in becoming a speaker to follow our own *Rotinonhsión:ni* traditional style of a semi-formal relation of events where one is asked to share what they know as amongst family and friends. In this style of speaking (or writing in this case) information is laid out for the listeners by backgrounding what the speaker feels the listeners may need to know, using culturally relevant terminology, yet allows for space for the speaker to go into a more vernacular style to help ease the listeners into the meanings of the more formal parts of the speaking. This can at times be humorous. I write in this style because in our culture a purely formal speech may be closely equivalent to a paper written at a high academic level. That level of writing outside of people who have expertise in that area may be intellectually inaccessible. In sharing this work this style of writing is intended for the reader to take what they need, reflect on it to help themselves or others. As already mentioned this self-reflection is intended to be from an emic point of view: how else could I possibly write this project in any other way other than in a way or from a stand point that is not ours? The importance of *Onkwehón:we* people using *Onkwehón:we* methodologies helps to solidify their validity where it counts the most, amoungst our selves and potentially into the dominant settler cultures.

This semi-formal style is reflected in the manner in which this project is laid-out. I begin with a section on my self-reflection as part of an overarching language reclamation effort and how I came to write it in order to situate the reader within my project as whole. The writing style is both formal and semi-formal.

A more formally written explanation of relevant cultural and linguistic terms as they pertain to *Onkwehón:we* identity follows. I felt the reader should have an understanding of the meanings of the words we use to identify ourselves in order to integrate the meanings of those words as we understand them into the next section. Those explanations open the door to beginning to understand what is commonly recognized by our peoples as our three main sources of instructions as to how to exist as an *Onkwehón:we* on this earth. These three epochal narratives are our Creation Story, the Great Law of Peace and the Good Message. These epochal narratives I believe are three of the keys we need to fully embrace language reclamation. Having provided this information to the reader to that point, I then give a short note on the history of language documentation of Iroquoian languages and a brief look at our language itself . Having situated the reader to be able to see where my self-reflection comes from and, hopefully for the reader to able to see all of the preceding information both come to life and evolve in my self-reflection, I then turn to my actual self-reflection narrative which follows stages of life as we recognize them in our culture. It is written in an informal style as if I were speaking to another person. Lastly I return to a more formal style speaking on our current linguistic and cultural situation which I feel requires language reclamation.

Akwate'nikòn:ra/my idea

My initial hope for completing this master's project was that it would be a research project documenting the words that our speakers use in describing oral proficiency. I'm a firm believer that in order to not only maintain but also to reclaim our linguistic and cultural integrity we must understand it

from its own lens, the lens that countless generations of our speakers have understood it through. Recently during a conversation with some friends on the topic of understanding our culture and language through its own lens, a friend offered an analogy that in plain English I feel hits the mark clearly. He said what I was saying is the same difference in reading the book and watching the movie version of the book. When you watch the movie it's someone else's interpretation of the book, it's not what the book says. My hope was that by documenting at least in my home community these words (and I know they exist as I've heard some of them) that my project would contribute to that avenue of language reclamation.

I use the concept of language reclamation in the same sense that Leonard (2011) does,

> that I have come to refer to what's happening in the Miami community as *language reclamation*, instead of by the more commonly used term *language revitalization*. We certainly are breathing new life into the language-hence revitalizing it- and the outcomes of our efforts do include many of the common targets of revitalization, such as increasing the number of speakers, increasing the domains in which language is used, and promoting intergenerational transmission of the language, which has begun in a few families. However, these and other linguistically defined targets occur within a much larger social process of claiming- or reclaiming- the appropriate cultural context and sense of value that the language would likely have always had if not for colonization. (p. 141)

That project was not to be, though. The reason for this is that I was moving from full-time teaching in-person to an online format throughout the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and family and community ceremonial obligations predating my UVic enrollment continued to exist. The time allotted to complete the Masters in Indigenous Language Revitalization (MILR) program requirements has come and gone and along with it the time required to do an actual research paper of that magnitude. I hope that this self-reflection will reflect the essence of Leonard's use of *language*

reclamation. I feel that has been what I've been working towards independent of having ever heard the term *language reclamation* while in the MILR program.

I was initially not totally receptive to the idea of a self-reflection. The MILR program has some excellent auto-ethnographies, research papers and manuals by fellow *Rotinonhsión:ni* students that are relatives such as: Hill (2015), Stacey (2016), Brant (2016), Hemlock (2020) and Elijah (2020). I didn't feel that a self-reflection of what I have experienced and what I am currently experiencing *tsi wakahronkha'onhátie' tánon' wakeweientehta'onhátie tsi nitewaweiennò:ten's/as I am becoming a fluent speaker and learning our ways* would be as of much utilitarian value as a research paper or another means of fulfilling the MILR requirements. Through feedback from family, friends, colleagues and research for this project I have begun to understand that my experiences told through self-reflection can offer value to the field of language revitalization/reclamation.

I write this project more particularly to and for my own people to provide an example of one *Rotinonhsión:ni* person's experiences and perspectives beginning in a time when resources for Indigenous Language revitalization and knowledge of how to use the then extant resources effectively was in its infant phase and into the current time when there exists many contributions to Indigenous Language Revitalization and a growing body of works specific to *Kanien'kéha* and other *Kanonhsión:ni* languages.

In the end this all circles back to the self, having the proper software (the internal sense of self) meaning discipline, a solid identity as an *Onkwehón:we* and what that means to us from our own linguistic, cultural and historical lens. Through these ways of understanding, success in reclaiming *Onkwehonwehnéha* and becoming an L2 (second language) speaker is possible. Raising L1 (I use L1 here to mean both first-language and Mother Tongue) speaking children as an L2 speaker is possible. Through our own understandings as *Onkwehón:we* we can find the proper pathways that will contribute to ensuring the linguistic and cultural integrity of our language and *Tsi nitewaweienò:ten's*.

There are literally hundreds of Indigenous nations across our Island which have spawned many Indigenous scholars both within their own cultural boundaries and unique ways of understanding what methodologies mean within their epistemologies, as well as modern Euro-North American academic systems.

I intend my writing to attempt to reflect what Antone (2013) said: “To achieve this, the Haudenosaunee must realize that their bundle of knowledge in a very different way based on our cultural way of visioning, relating, thinking, and doing” (p. 187).

Another *Rotinonhsión:ni* author, an *Onontowane’á:ka/Seneca,* Darren Thomas (2012), wrote his master’s thesis for the Department of Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University on the subject of *Rotinonhsión:ni* research methodology. Through a partnership with the Deyohahá:ge Indigenous Knowledge Centre located at Six Nations Polytechnic at Grand River, Thomas (2012, pp. 44-45) was able to work with four Indigenous Knowledge professors, all Mother Tongue speakers of *Kanonhsión:ni* languages.

In his work *OGWEHOWENEHA: A Hodinhǫśǫ:nih research methodology*, Thomas (2012) visited *Rotinonhsión:ni* knowledge holders in his home community of Six Nations of the Grand River. Thomas (2012) was able to map out a *Rotinonhsión:ni* based methodology that “may inform strategies for health and wellbeing, decolonization, liberation, self-governance and self-determination” (p. ii). It is important to note that he includes language within the overall scope of these things.

He found through his interactions with these Indigenous Knowledge professors (though far deeper than I list here) that our Ontology (the nature of being) includes the following *Atenonhweratóntshera’/the Thanksgiving Address, Kaié:ri niiorì:wake/The Four Ceremonies of Thanksgiving, Kaianerehkó:wa/the Great Law of Peace* and the *Karihwí:io/the Good Message* (pp. 61-62). Our Epistemology (the study of knowledge) includes “reciprocal responsibility to knowledge” (p. 57) and this can come from reflection (p. 61). Our Axiology (the nature of value and valuation) may be

summarised by the word *Ka'nikonhrí:io*/*the Good-Mind* (p. 59). He sums up his findings by saying that *Rotinonhsión:ni* "knowledge is a complex connection to all elements in the universe. It is difficult to frame these separate concepts and assumptions on reality, knowledge, values and methods that form a methodology, as there are elements within each that intertwine with each other" (p. 63).

An interesting point is that all of the Indigenous Knowledge professors referenced the concepts in terms with how they understood them from their *Kanonhsión:ni* language. As well, noted that, "arising from the inclusion of the language, I began, as predicted by Hubert, to perceive Hodinhǫ́ǫ:nih knowledge differently" (p.74).

In writing this Masters project I may not totally arrive at what Antone (2013) in his PhD thesis calls "'Irocentric' (totality centered on Iroquois ways and culture in how an Onkwehón:we exercises thought and wisdom) in the cultural context given the historic and contemporary reality"(p. 4). Yet, I will attempt it, knowing full well that I am simply still learning.

The sources I draw upon from the Western written/literary tradition are chosen intentionally to reflect our own *Rotinonhsión:ni* peoples' voices, whether they are found in published or unpublished academic papers, traditional narratives collected in Iroquoian language and English as well. I will also draw upon historic and ethnographic narratives, modern linguistic sources and historic linguistic documentation.

In some instances, I use ceremonial language. The use of this ceremonial language is disapproved of by some of our people who consider it intellectual property and that the only legitimate place for such language is amongst ourselves (Foster, 1994). The belief is our culture, languages and knowledge should not be placed in such positions that may be harmful to us given the past and current efforts of governments to erase and undermine our identities as *Onkwehón:we* people.

Michael K. Foster (1994), in his biography of the late *Kahoniokwen'á:ka*/Cayuga chief Jacob E. Thomas, speaks to this phenomenon. I agree that our Indigenous intellectual property must be

protected. Whatever ceremonial language that will be used in this project will not come from any unpublished oral traditional sources, only those that are currently in the public sphere; they are used in order to respect and maintain my own and others' peace.

I bear in mind that Antone (2013) also says "the reality of the 21st century must include the recovery of culture and making of meaning of Onkwehón:we teachings in a world, inside and outside of the Longhouse, surrounded by materialistic Western ideas and practices"(pp. 5-6). This to me means we must be willing to examine new teaching and learning tools as they become available to us to find out how much they can help us versus how much they may enable the conditions that have brought us to our current cultural and linguistic situation or create new internally or externally directed dysfunctional dependencies.

One of the methods that teachers have been using within the adult *Kanien'kéha* immersion language program sphere with this in mind is the conscious understandings that arise through forms of modern linguistics such as the Root-Word Method (Green & Maracle, 2018, pp. 146-155). Linguistics surely is an effective method for helping to understand linguistic and cultural concepts for some L2 learners who are open to, or already have a strong cultural background nearly, or as closely as it is possible, without understanding them from the language itself in some cases. However, with learners who do not have that background or openness there remains the potential drawbacks of creating an understanding and speaking our language from a linguistical perspective that can be divorced from its mother culture. Nevertheless, it still can be considered as an example of using one of the tools of Western education (which has and continues to have an incredibly destructive influence on our languages and cultures) in facilitating the understandings of our culture and languages in an accessible and practically learned way within the unnatural confines of the 9:00 to 5:00 Western world that Antone (2013) spoke of.

Nahò:ten wake'nikonhrinehtáhkhwa'/That which leads my mind

Tsi nitionkwé:non owennahshòn:'a: Terms of linguistic and cultural identification

Before I move on, I'd like to begin by explaining a few of the terms we use to identify ourselves. These terms are important as they are intrinsic to our original identity as opposed to our modern identities as Indians, Mohawks, bands, tribes, Canadians and/or Americans. Understanding these terms and how we identify ourselves is a part of language and cultural reclamation.

We call ourselves *Kanonhsión:ni*/*the extended house* (Woodbury et al., 1992.) in the general sense where in English people would say the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. In speaking of the ways of the *Kanonhsión:ni* we say *Kanonhsionni'kéha'*/*the way of the extended house*.

When we refer to ourselves in the modern national sense we say *Kanien'kehá:ka*/*Chert or Flint land People*, a reference to the heart land of our country what is now called the Mohawk Valley in New York State. When we reference our language specifically, we say *Kanien'kéha'*/*the way of the Chert or Flint land People*.

Our current village site has been extant since the year 1716 (Reid, 2004) after a series of moves beginning in the year 1667 (Chauchetiere, 1981) from the Mohawk Valley to *Kenhtà:ke,* now called La Prairie, Quebec. When we talk about ourselves in relation to where we live we say *Kahnawa'kehró:non*/*people who reside at the rapids*. When we speak of *Kanien'kéha*/*the language or way of the Chert or Flint land People* as it is spoken here in *Kahnawà:ke* we say *Kahnawa'kéha'*/the language or way of the people who reside at the rapids.

Our most common name for ourselves though is *Onkwehón:we*/*forever people*, this name holds true for the other the *Kanonhsión:ni* nations as well. When we are referring to our languages the *Kanonhsión:ni* peoples commonly will just say *Onkwehonwehnéha'*/*the way of the forever people* unless there is a felt to be a need to specify their specific *Onkwehón:we* language. This term is also inclusive of the complete cultural paradigm of any and all of our ways.

The word *Onkwehón:we* is commonly used as a cognate for Indigenous both by Indigenous and others alike. Well, it can include this definition as it is used by our Mother Tongue speakers as a catch all term for the original inhabitants of this hemisphere, yet they would not use it to reference the Indigenous peoples of any other continent. We call in general terms other Indigenous peoples of this continent *Thionkwehonwehserá:te/they are a different or another kind of Onkwehón:we*.

The word *Onkwehón:we* is composed of two morphemes. The noun-verb *Ón:kwe/human being* and a clitic suffix -*onwe/genuine ,true, original* and *forever*. *Tekarón:take* Delaronde interpreted the word thusly:

> [but] it doesn't mean original people or real people. It means something closer to the people of the original way, the way of forever or the way of creation. *Ón:kwe* means the *people,* and *ón:we* means *forever,* in the sense that creation is forever. (as quoted in Hall, emphasis added, 2023, p.19)

What *Tekarón:take* was speaking of, in terms of creation, in light of his definition of *Onkwehón:we,* is: "We follow what creation showed us, which we call *Sha'oié:ra*. Some people say *Sha'oié:ra* means *natural*, but not how the white man understands it. When we say *Sha'oié:ra*, it means the *direction creation goes"* (Hall, 2023, p.19, emphasis added).

I agree and feel that this is an excellent explanation of who we are. A few years back one of my former co-teachers *Ro'nikonhkátste* Norton gave me a similar and independently thought of explanation. It would be too easy for us to fall into the trap of thinking that we are simply the -*onwe/genuine or true* peoples of this land in the sense that the word 'Indigenous' imparts.

Its meaning unfolds from the time of our creation narratives in the first of three epochs when our creator *Shitiotonhwentsatáhsawe/when the earth began* gave us *Tsi nitewaweiennò:ten's/our manners or ways of enacting* in such ways that ensured not only our physical, emotional and spiritual

health but that the same relationships with other life forms that exist on and around this earth would be able to continue reciprocally *tsi nén:we'/forever*.

Shitiotonhwentsatáhsawe/when the earth began

The literary documentation of the Creation narratives of Iroquoian peoples stretches back to a Recollect missionary amongst the *Wéndat/Huron people* to 1636 (White, 2007). Since that time many versions have been recorded by Europeans, Euro-North Americans and our own people as well. As with all of our traditions that now have a literary tradition, there are also maintained oral versions of how we and the earth we live upon came into being. *Ahkwesashró:non/resident of Ahkwesáshne, Kanien'kehá:ka/Mohawk* Kevin J. White, in his 2007 PhD dissertation, "Haudenosaunee Worldviews through Iroquoian Cosmologies: The Published narratives in Historical Context," provides the following:

> Returning to the original published Iroquois (or Haudenosaunee) cosmologies, I shed new light on the development of interpretation and revelation as it pertains to the Haudenosaunee. I analyze and edit J.N.B. Hewitt's "Iroquois Cosmology Part I" to reveal the scholar, the informant, and a unique clash of their worldviews. Hewitt was a baseline for comparison to other published narratives that I have assembled here in contrast to William N. Fenton's analysis in his 1962 article "This Island, the World on Turtle's Back". I examine in detail translations of the cosmologies, including some by modern Native scholars presented on the World Wide Web. My examination of these works reveals transitions in both Native and non-native thinking over the centuries of contact. Patterns of change show an indigenous culture struggling to balance ancient traditions, sacred beliefs, and obligations to generations yet unborn against the assimilationist tide of the larger Western culture. (White, pp. vi-v)

There are many commonalities concerning the main events and the results of said events as they occurred and as they have been recorded in both the literary and oral record of our creation narratives. There are also differences, some slight some large. For the interested, White provides a comparative

table of what are considered some of the major versions and his analysis of them as well as why he feels they are important (White, p. viii).

This section, however, is not intended to give an analysis of our creation narratives or to rehash the various versions of them. My intent here is to provide brief summations of what our people have been calling in the English language our "original instructions". For this I have chosen to rely on a version originally transcribed by hand in *Ononta'kéha/the Onondaga language* on the Grand River territory in the year 1900 by J.N.B. Hewitt from the *Onontowane'á:ka/Seneca* Chief John A. Gibson (Hewitt, 1928). Having familiarity with many of the written versions I chose this particularly as I feel the language used in describing our original instructions by Gibson carries the most-commonly agreed-upon cultural concepts, not only across the various versions but as those understandings continue to exist in the current oral traditions amongst our nations. Kimura provides a biographical essay of Gibson (Kimura, 2012) for the interested.

The transcriber of Mr. Gibson's creation narrative, J.N.B. Hewitt was also a *Rotinonhsión:ni* man, a *Skaró:ren/Tuscarora*. Merriam provides an in depth look at Mr. Hewitt in her 2010 PhD dissertation, "The Preservation of Iroquois Thought: J.N.B. Hewitt's legacy of Scholarship for his people" (Merriam, 2010).

In 2005 the late *Onontowane'á:ka/Seneca* scholar and intellectual John C. Mohawk republished the same story under the title: "Iroquois Creation Story: John Arthur Gibson and J.N.B. Hewitt's myth of the earth grasper." Mohawk felt that Hewitt's English translations of Gibson's *Ononta'kéha* would leave "many students and young people […] unlikely to be able to penetrate, even when they are aware of the importance of the material" (Mohawk, 2005, p. ii). Mohawk's work was thus to make this story accessible to our people today in a more user-friendly manner. He does an admirable job of it. It certainly is a much easier read than Hewitt's translation. I would say in my own estimation that Hewitt's English carries more of the depth and subtleties of meanings that are conveyed in the original

Ononta'kéha that Gibson relayed the story in. For both of these reasons I include quotes from both writers' English versions.

Gibson told of the manner in which the first man was created. It reveals how we are related corporally and spiritually to the earth and this connection links us to the land that he says exists on the other side of the sky where his grandmother, who had initially created this earth, had come from. He explains it in this fashion:

> When Sky holder again returned to the place where his bark lodge stood thus he said "now I shall make what shall be called human beings; they will dwell here on this floating island".
>
> So as soon as he finished speaking he began to make them, and he said, "this earth which I have taken up is really alive {immortal}. Thus, also is it as to the earth that is present here, and verily the body which I shall make from that kind of thing shall continue to live by".
>
> Then at that time he made the flesh of a human being. As soon as he had completed it he then meditated and then said "that verily, perhaps, will result in good that thus it shall continue to be that he shall have life as much as that I myself am alive.
>
> Now at that time he took a portion of his own life and he put it into the inside of the body of the human being; so also he took a portion of his own mind and he enclosed it in his head; so also he took a portion of his own blood and he enclosed it inside of his flesh; so also did he take a portion of his power to see and enclosed it in his head; so also he took a portion of his power to speak and he enclosed it in the throat of the human being. Now at that time, too, he placed his breath in the body of the human being. Just then the human being came to life and he arose and he stood up here on the earth that is present. (Hewitt, 1928, pp. 510-511)

When Gibson tells of the creation of the first woman he then calls forth the man he had first created. He lays out what is our first social compact in regard to our gender roles as men and women. We are to work for each other's contentment of body and mind. We are to have one mind and not to do

things that cause one another mental anguish. Our children will join us together physically and mentally (the word Gibson uses, which in *Kanien'kéha* is *O'nikòn:ra,* can, in my experience, equally be applied to the word spirit in this context). He tells us that our physical embodiment is not immortal and that our unions in marriage are to last the number of days that we will live and that his instructions shall last as long the earth will last:

> As soon as he returned to the place where his lodge stood he then said, "I think that perhaps that the way in which I have completed the human being is not good. It seems that in his going about he is lonesome."
>
> "So, perhaps, it will result it in good should I make yet one other human being so that there will be a pair." Now at that time he made another. As to that one, too, he made her flesh from the earth. And when he had completed it he said "that, perhaps, will result in good that I make them alike. That one too, shall be like me in my bodily movements." Then at that time he took a portion of his own life and placed in the body of her whom he just made; also, he took a portion of his own mind and placed in the head of her whose body he had just finished; also, he took a portion of his blood and placed it in the flesh of her he had just finished. Then at that time he took a portion of his power to look around and to talk and placed them both in her head which was part of her body. Then he put his breath into her body as part of it. So now verily she came to life.
>
> Sky holder said "listen, do thou stand erect on the earth here present." Just as soon as she stood upright he then said, "I myself have completed thy body. I have also have completed all the things which the earth here present holds and upon which thou dost stand at present. So now I ordain it, and I give thee control of all things." Now at that time he called out to him whom he first created.
>
> "Verily I have created both your bodies. So now I ordain that ye shall marry. So, thou whose body I first formed shall continue to be visibly stronger".

“Verily thou shall continue to travel about constantly over the earth here present. Also, it shall be your hard toil that ye two shall continue to have peaceful minds, ye two who have married. So, do not ever distress her mind”

Now, at that time he said “now thou, in turn, whose body I have just finished, shall have this duty. So, I lay all these matters before thee. It shall be entirely by thy hard toil that he whom thoust hast married shall breath (have vigor). In the next place thou also shall see what kind of suffering it is to have a human being take form within thy body”.

“So now I have placed before thee all matters. So verily thoust shall go to and fro around the fire, so that he who has become thy aid in all the things I have ordained for you shall have a peaceful mind. Also, Human beings shall take form as to the bodies of you two and the earth shall be covered by humans who will dwell there.

So now I have ordained that you two shall have a difference in the length of days so death will take place according to the days ye two have, and ye two untie in marriage during your natural lives. So now I have mixed together the minds of you two and your blood of you two.

So then ye two shall see human beings take form through your bodies, and by means of the mind and also the blood of you two shall be bound together. So, I ordain for you two that you two shall have but one mind at all times. Do not you two distress one the others mind during the days which are yours. So verily that only shall separate you two is death, by the difference in the number of days you each have.

So thus, it shall continue to come to be in the future as to your posterity that they shall continue to grow up, also, they shall continue to marry, and that shall continue, and when one grows up that one shall marry only one person. Death only shall separate them severally. And so, my ordinances shall last as long as the earth here present shall last.”

> Now Teharonhiawá:kon said " now verily I myself have completed thy body; now verily it is possible that thoust dost stand on the earth present here. So now behold what the earth present here contains. I myself verily have completed all. Now then I have made you in-charge of on the earth here present here and what it contains. It will continue to give comfort to thy mind, the things that I have planted for them the people that will populate the earth. (Hewitt, 1928, pp. 520-521)

Having provided relevant examples of the concepts of the initial parts of our original instructions with Hewitt's English translations, I now turn to Mohawk's (2005) updated English for the remainder of this section. After time had passed and human beings had become numerous upon the earth, Sky Holder returned to the first two humans in fulfillment of his promise to do so:

"There was, however, absolute silence. There was no ceremony which they should have been performing, and no business they should have attended to. Everything was simply neglected" (Mohawk, 2005, p. 75). In his promised return *Teharonhiá:wakon/Sky Holder* brought the Four Ceremonies (Great Feather Dance, Thanksgiving Drum Dance, Men's Personal Song and the Bowl Game) in order for the people to have a vehicle through which they would be able to give expression of their thankfulness for their lives and that processes of creation continue unabated.

> Now what I am about to give you I shall regard as an important matter. What I will leave here on earth is the Four Ceremonies. You will assemble from time to time when you see the season's first fruit and you will see to an appointed place. And the whole body of the people must assemble and you will mutually rejoice […] you will congratulate one another and when you have ended you will thank me. (Mohawk, 2005, pp. 75-76)

Gibson tells us that these Four Ceremonies (Great Feather Dance, Thanksgiving Drum Dance, Men's Personal Song and the Bowl Game) are patterned after "the ceremonies which are taking place in the Sky World" and that "the pleasure with which the Sky World beings celebrate is most important, I

wanted it to be such that the same ceremonies in the Sky World and those on the earth were the same" (Mohawk, 2005, p. 76). He goes on to lay out what would be become and remain the basic yearly main ceremonial calendar of events that continues into the present day including the prototype forms of the Thanksgiving Tobacco Burning Speech, which would in turn become the basis for our daily thanks giving address *Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen/The Matters/words that proceed.* Gibson ends this section saying that *Teharonhiawá:kon/Sky Holder* gives the following directions regarding the sum of what are our original instructions: "it will be the duty of all people that they will possess the power to be happy, and they will be in the habit of giving thanks when they see that all my work continues to please the minds of the children, even to the last, and that you all have an equal right to it" (Mohawk, 2005, p.79), and also: "that shall always be the principle thing, that the happiness of life shall be the foremost matter. You will greet one another with thanksgiving. You will also greet me with thanksgiving (Mohawk, 2005, p.80). At the end of all these instructions *Teharonhiawá:kon/Sky Holder* leaves the last "Now I have placed among you a very important matter. Love. You will continue to love one another. Then there will be peace" (Mohawk, 2005, p. 83).

There is much more in the actual narrative than I've quoted here, I surmise the following main points in their essence: we have the responsibilities to mutually work and give thanks. We possess equal rights to the happiness that derives from family, ceremony and the resources, human and other that support such life. Love for each other, love for the ceremonies, love the sources of our physical contentment, love is the cultural glue that bound us together to our original teachings in the earliest times of our history. It is this love of how we were created to be that continues to hold the power for us to reclaim our languages.

Shitso'terontà:'on ne Ka'nikonhrí:io/when the good mind was placed back down

Of course, like many peoples in the world, we have, in our pre-Columbian history, for one reason or another, come to internecine violence amongst our fellow *Onkwehón:we*, leading to our second epoch– the establishment of the *Kanonhsión:ni*/*The Extended House* (*the house is extended so that there is a place for all*).

As in my last section on *Shitiotonhwentsatáhsawe/when the earth began* I have no intent to go through the events of the complete narrative. As well, I have again chosen for a second time to use a version (and there are many written in addition to the oral versions that remain) dictated by John A. Gibson. Here again I feel the language used in describing the reestablishment of our original instructions by Gibson carries the most commonly agreed-upon cultural concepts, not only across the various versions, but as those understandings continue to exist in the current oral traditions amongst our nations. This version was transcribed by the anthropologist Alexander A. Goldenweiser in 1912. It is also in *Ononta'kéha/Onondaga Language* (Woodbury et al., 1992).

The *Kanonhsión:ni* is also known as the *Kaianerehkó:wa* or *Kaianerenhsera'kó:wa*/*The Great-Law of Peace.* Both of these words (*Kanonhsión:ni*/*Kaianerehkó:wa)* may be replaced at times by speakers by using one of its key concepts, *Ka'nikonhrí:io*/*The Good Mind.*

The formation of the *Kaianerenhsera'kó:wa* was made possible through the acceptance and recognition of the spiritual, pragmatic and moral imperatives of its three main principles: *Ka'nikonhrí:io*/*The Good Mind, Skén:nen*/*peace*, and *Ka'shatsténhsera'*/*power* (*Karihwí:io*/*the Good Message* being used in place of *Ka'nikonhrí:io* in earlier times).

In Gibson's Creation narrative, *Teharonhiawá:kon*/*Sky Holder* leaves us with a prophetic foretelling of reasons for the establishment of the *Kaianerenhsera'kó:wa*/*The Great-Law of Peace.* He states:

> Now I am leaving the earth for the last time. It may come to pass that you will again forget to love one another, and peace. The next time, I will send another person to aid you. Only twice shall it be repeated that I will send a messenger to you. When the third comes, you will see what shall happen to the earth. (Mohawk, 2005, p. 88)

Indeed, it had come to pass in that way. Gibson describes that we had forgotten both Love and Peace.

> This is what happened when it originated, the great law. This is what happened in ancient times: There was warfare, and they habitually killed each other, the Indians of the several nations. This is what was going on: They scalped one another at the various settlements, that is, the warriors were roaming across the bush, scalping the inhabitants. (Woodbury et al., 1992, p. 1)

A male child was born to a young woman who with her mother had sought refuge on the north shore of Lake Ontario (Woodbury et al., 1992, p. 2,), a place our people today remember as being located on the modern Kanien'kehá:ka settlement called by its residents in *Kanien'kéha, Kenhtè:ke*, the meaning of which is unknown to me. It is also known as the Tyendinega or Bay of Quinte Mohawk Territory.

Gibson tells that after the boy's grandmother, who did not believe her daughter did not know the origin of her pregnancy, was visited by a messenger in a dream and that "for it is true that she does not know what happened" (Woodbury et al., 1992, p. 7). The messenger proceeds to tell her that, "He is sending him, the one who you all believe is the ruler, and he is coming from the sky above the earth"(Woodbury et al., 1992, p. 8). He goes on to say that, "when in the course of time, he becomes a man. In fact he is going to be working here beneath and on the other side of the sun" (Woodbury et al., 1992, p. 9). His work is to be that, "he will travel to different villages all over the bush; to small settlements of families, and there he is going to work to stop what is going on, and, indeed, what is going on is that they are killing one another" (Woodbury et al., 1992, pp. 9-10).

This boy was to bear the name *Tekánawí:ta'*. I include the name here as dictated and written, though many of our traditional people hold that name should only be mentioned either in the recitation of the Great Law or during the portions of the origin story and songs that occur during the installation of a *Roiá:ner*/*Chief*. Two language work-arounds to this name taboo that are used are *Rononhsionnì:ton*/*He has extended the house* and *Skén:nen Rahá:wi*/*He's carrying peace*, and the name Peace Maker which is frequently used in English.

When *Rononhsionnì:ton* was of the age to walk around and began to talk he began to speak about "It is not good for people to be unkind to one another" (Woodbury et al., 1992, p. 14). In time when his mother asked him about a proposal made by his grandmother to return to their village he answered: "That is what I want, to see people of our own kind" (Woodbury et al., 1992, p. 15). He stated that, upon meeting with his own people, that "we shall converse, and I will tell them that now they are arriving, the Power and the Good Message and Peace" (Woodbury et al., 1992, p. 15).

After the establishment of what is known now as *Karihwí:io*/*The Good Message* or the oral recitations of the messages of the *Onontowane'á:ka* chief *Skaniatarí:io*/*Handsome Lake* speakers have substituted the term *Ka'nikonhrí:io*/*The Good Mind* to keep the two historic events distinguishable. The message he gave to his mother and grandmothers' home village is this:

> this, indeed, is what it means: when it stops, the slaughter of your own people who live here on earth, then everywhere peace will come about, by day and also by night, and it will come about as one travels around, everyone will be related. Then indeed there will be no danger in future days to come. Now again the next matter, secondly, I say now it is arriving, the Power (*Ka'shatsténhsera')*, and this means that all the different nations, will become a single one, and the Great Law will come into being, so that all will be related to each other, and will come to be just a single family, and in the future, in days to come, this family will continue on. Now in turn, the other, my third saying now it is arriving the Peace (*Skén:nen*), this means that everyone will

> become related, men and women, and also the young people and the children, and when all are relatives, every nation, then there will be peace as they roam about by day and also by night. Now, also, it will be possible for them to assemble in meetings. Then there will be truthfulness, and they will uphold hope and charity, so that it is peace that will unite all of the people, indeed, it will be as though they have but one mind, and they are a single person with only one body and one head and one life, which means there will be unity. Moreover, and most importantly, one is going to assemble in meetings where it will be announced that all of mankind will repent of their sins, even evil people, and in the future, they will be kind to one another, one and all. When they are functioning, the Good Message and also the power and the Peace, moreover, these will be the principle things everybody will live by; these will be the great values among people. (Woodbury et al., 1992, pp. 37-40, emphasis added)

This would be the same message reiterated throughout his work in joining the nations together.

An interesting example of self-reflection in the narrative occurs when *Rononhsionnì:ton* is travelling to the Mohawk country to spread his message and encounters a cannibal. Seeing the cannibal leave his house *Rononhsionnì:ton* climbs on top of his house. Upon his return from fetching water and hanging his pot to the fire *Rononhsionnì:ton* watch's him through the smoke hole in the roof. The cannibal upon seeing the reflection of *Rononhsionnì:ton* in the pot as he went to remove his meat from it pondered upon it and thought, "I am exceedingly handsome and I have a nice face; it is probably not right, my habit of eating humans. So now I will stop, from now on I ought not to kill humans anymore" (Woodbury et al., 1992, pp. 82-83). This is the same type of self-reflection Thomas (2012) spoke of: "

> The Hodinhǫ́ǫ́ǫ:nih believe that since the Creator has provided each of us with our own minds, He inherently made a connection between our minds and His; therefore, we have the ability to think for ourselves. Discovering what and how we can contribute to knowledge happens through a deep reflective process. (p. 43)

The cannibal was able to regain his connection to creation through this process. This shows also that concessions to those who had formerly engaged in acts that are antithetical to our original instructions may be given. The majority of the remaining narrative concerns itself with the events of confederation with the themes mentioned above running through them and the political functioning of the *Kanonhsión:ni*.

There is only one remaining thing that I wish to touch upon in this section. That concept is the reestablishment of giving thanks. When the messages of confederation were at last accepted by the Five Nations peoples,

> thereupon *Tekánawí:ta'* stood up, saying, "the great power came from up in the sky, the great power we accepted when came to consensus is now functioning Our house is (has become) now complete. Now, therefore, we shall give thanks, that is, we'll thank the creator of the earth, that is, he who has planted all the kinds of weeds and varieties of shrubs and all the kinds of trees; and springs, flowing water, such as rivers and large bodies of water, such as lakes; and the sun that keeps moving during by day, and by night the moon, and where the sky is, the stars, which no one is able to count; moreover, the way it is on the earth in relation to which no one is able to tell the extent to which it is to their benefit, that is the people whom he created and who will continue to live on earth.
>
> This, then, is then is the reason we thank him , the one that has great power, the one who is the Creator, for that which will now move forward, the Good Message also the Power also the Peace, (that which is) the Great Law. (Woodbury et al., 1992, pp. 294-296, emphasis added)

One observer, Col. James Smith, an Englishman and former captive, adopted by *Kahnawa'kehró:non* in 1755, kept a journal and later published an account of his life of how this way of being was being enacted amongst his adopted people. He summed up the concept as a whole rather well: "they appeared to be fulfilling the scriptures beyond those who profess to believe them, in that of

taking no thought of to-morrow (sic): and also in *living in love, peace and friendship together, without disputes*. In this respect, they shame those who profess Christianity" (Smith, 1978, p.64, emphasis added).

Shitio'terontà:'on ne Karihwí:io/when the good message was placed down

The third epoch is rather recent, dating only from 225 years ago; June 15th, 1799 (Swatzler, 2000, pp. 266-267), wherein the *Onontowane'á:ka*/*Big Mountain Land People* (Seneca) Turtle Clan Chief *Skaniatarí:io*/*Handsome Lake* began to have a series of visions. He was visited by four messengers of our creator, brought over time until his death at Onondaga New York on August 10th 1815 (Thomas & Boyle, 1994, p. 125). These messages reinforce the validity of the physical, emotional and spiritual values of our creation narratives and the re-establishment of *Ka'nikonhrí:io* through the *Kaianerenhsera'kó:wa*. It also added new ideals and ideas in how our peoples are to continue to be as *Onkwehón:we* in the face of the rapid colonialization of our countries and our minds, which continues to the present. There are those of our people who feel that some, if not all, of the new ideals and ideas are inconsistent with our original ways and that they are Christian in origin. This epoch was called and remains known as *Karihwí:io*/*The Good Message*.

I choose not to include extensive quotes in this section as all of the published English-language texts that I know of fail to have the same impact as the oral recitations in a *Kanonhsión:ni* language that I have been present for. Nor do they carry the same force of language as the sources I've used for the creation story and Great law quotes. Two of the main published sources people use for information on the *Karihwí:io* are the book *Teachings From The Longhouse* by the late *Kahoniokwen'á:ka*/*Cayuga* chief Jacob Thomas and Terry Boyle (1994) and A.C. Parker's *The Code of Handsome the Seneca Prophet* (Parker, 1990). From my own experience and understanding of the oral tradition recitations, neither of these books represents fully the cultural and linguistic concepts contained in the messages. Parker's

version is very choppy and to sum it up is more like snippets from each message rather than the entire message. Thomas and Boyle's is more complete, yet seems to fall between both translations and a more informal explanation format. I found the format a little surprising given that Jacob Thomas was very well versed in giving the traditional oral recitations of both the *Kaianerenhsera'kó:wa* and the *Karihwí:io*. I'd say it is a good enough starting point for one who is interested in learning about the messages in *Karihwí:io*. Thomas & Boyle (1994) note cryptically that, "It is possible that in the near future the Code may be lost, in the sense that it will not be heard in its original tongue, since most of the young people no longer speak their native language" (p. 124). Shimony's (1994) *Conservatism among the Iroquois at the Six Nations Reserve* writes extensively on the *Karihwí:io,* including its format and influence on the lives of the Longhouse people at Six Nations during her field work during the 1950's.

Perhaps some the best English language interpretations of the *Karihwí:io* with historical and linguistic contexts given have been on the Original Peoples Podcast. *Tonawanda Onontowane'á:ka*/*Seneca* Jamie Jacobs, who is speaker of the messages in his *Onontowane'á:ka*/*Seneca* language, goes over the first and second days of the oral recitation on November 2nd, 2023 and November 14th, 2023, respectively. The episodes covering the third and fourth days remain forthcoming. If one is not a speaker of our languages and/or is reluctant to attend an oral recitation, I'd say that between Thomas, Shimony, and Jacobs, their works are excellent starting points to learn more.

Attitudes towards this last epoch, as it stands currently among the *Rotinonhsión:ni* people span the distance between those who know nothing of it, to those who believe that it is the sole source of traditional knowledge, excluding all that came before it and holding up Handsome Lake as the only legitimate source of knowledge. to those who believe it to be, not only a hindrance to re-gaining our original identies but that it enables settler colonialism to flourish. In my experience with the *Karihwí:io,* I've found that most of what people have told me about it–from both its detractors and its supporters–has been inaccurate. The common factor with both positions has been that they usually do not speak an

Iroquoian language. While there is more to it than that (that is business for our own people to reconcile), it is sufficient to say that the *Karihwí:io* remains, respectively to both people who respect it and those who don't, both a sensitive and controversial topic.

There are many other historic and culturally relevant events that have occurred and continue to un-fold that are contributing to my understanding of what being an *Onkwehón:we* means through an *Onkwehón:we* lens in relation to my own learning, teaching and reclamation of *Onkwehonwehnéha'*. So many, in fact, that they go far beyond the scope of this project.

Onkwawén:na/our language

Like all journeys in order to move from geographic area to another the absolute minimum requirement for moving towards your destination is understanding where you're at now in order to chart the most effect course of travel to your destination.

The documentation of *Onkwehón:we*/*Iroquoian* languages begins with Cartier's first and second voyages up the St. Lawrence river in 1534 (Mithun, 1982). Since that time a rich documentation of Iroquoian languages has been left primarily by various Christian missionaries. They produced dictionaries, grammars to teach themselves how to speak (in order to proselytize us), and once Christianity gained a foothold in our world they produced a rich body of religious texts. Many of those works are now available to learners online and, I have to say, many of the dictionaries are very well done. As time went on our own people began to do the same, translating Christian texts. They also did the same for some traditional ceremonies (Hale, 1989, p. 100). As the number of our *Kanien'kehá:ka* people who were literate began to increase, they too have left a documentary trail of how they spoke and wrote in our language. It is important here to say that all these archival works require orthographical updates in order to make them accessible to our modern learners. This will require the knowledge of historic phonological and morphological changes that have occurred in *Kanien'kéha'* in to

make these orthographical changes. As well, the understandings of the orthographical systems and contextual understanding of how the documents were organized by the authors of them.

Linguists and scholars as well have been contributing to the documentary record of our languages. Some scholars have stated that the original parent language to all Iroquoian languages–what linguists call Proto Iroquoian–can be traced to around 2624 BC (Dewar et al., 2017). Julian (2010) in his PhD Thesis, "A History of the Iroquoian Languages," attempts to reconstruct Proto Iroquoian: "This work represents the first systematic attempt to reconstruct PI [Proto-Iroquoian] phonology and morphology and trace subsequent developments through to modern languages" (p. ii). I can neither support or go against these estimates. I can only say that our people have always been here since the earth was new, and we still remember that, at one time we all, if not spoke the same language, then our languages were closer than they are today.

Our language is complex, both morphologically and grammatically, despite only having three categories of words: noun, verbs and particles. *Kanien'kéha'* is considered, from a linguistic view, a polysynthetic language. In 1882 at Oxford university, Professor Max Müller noted "To my mind the structure of such a language as the Mohawk is quite sufficient evidence that those who worked out such a work of art were powerful reasoners and accurate classifiers"(Hale, 1989, p. 169). Mithun (1996) provides a brief grammatical sketch of the language that scratches the surface for those interested in what that means. She also has forthcoming an extensive grammar (p.c., Mithun).

I never knew just how complex the language is until I started to take an interest in it from a linguistic viewpoint, which greatly opened my eyes to just how much our speakers have absorbed–and continue to know–through oral transmission. I cannot understate how much their current work, combined with the archival records as an external form of hardware (hardware in the sense of external inputs, not done by us for us), has and will be useful into the future in the potential face of language dormancy of Mother Tongue speakers.

There now exist dictionaries in all six of the *Kanonhsión:ni* languages as a result of linguists and Mother Tongue speaker collaborations. As this age of digitization increases, we're finding more and more historic and current linguistic documentation that is useful in language reclamation.

All of the archival materials are great sources for language reclamation. They point to the importance of our languages in previous historical times, but they rarely explicitly say so. It's more something that we have to surmise. A rare exception to this is what one *Rotinonhsión:ni* felt about the topic. This occurred in the year 1744, toward the close of the treaty at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as recorded by one of the founding fathers of the United States of America, Benjamin Franklin. After an offer from the Virginia delegation to the *Rotinonhsión:ni*, who "would send down half a dozen of their sons to that College, the Government would take Care that they should be well provided for, and instructed in all the Learning of the white People" (Franklin, n.p.). Franklin recorded that the speaker for the *Kanonhsión:ni,* in his reply, followed the usual customs of waiting until the next day lest the proposition be thought of as having been taking lightly, answered thusly:

> We have had some Experience of it: Several of our Young People were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but when they came back to us they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, or kill an Enemy, *spoke our Language imperfectly*; were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, or Counsellors; *they were totally good for nothing*… (Franklin, 1784, emphasis added)

We can ascertain that the man who gave the answer to the Virginia delegation had a deep and intimate understanding of the meanings of cultural and linguistic integrity through an *Onkwehón:we* lens. Not having the knowledge and skill to be able to fulfill the expected gender role of a man-providing shelter, sustenance and defence for the peoples physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing–combined with an

imperfect ability to communicate in one's language can render one alienated from one's source culture even in a time of cultural and linguistic abundance.

How does this viewpoint reflect our current understanding vis-à-vis our language status? In one of the ritual songs to our ancestors in the Condolence ritual of standing a new *Roiá:ner, Kahrhawenrá:ton*/*Over the Forest,* the line "*né: ki' ne í:sewen eniakoténhhte' nene ohnà:ken eniakaonkóhtahkwe'*/*you have said that sad will be the fate of those who come in latter times*"(Hale, 1989, p. 196, orthography updated and emphasis added) seems to represent our fate rather well.

In order for us *Onkwehón:we* to reclaim our languages, I feel that is imperative that we understand that what we call *Onkwehonwehnéha'* is inclusive to the culture that the languages originate from. The same word *Onkwehonwehnéha'* being used to describe both the languages and culture. Our language shows us that our Ancestors held that the language they spoke and the way that they lived are to be conceptually inseparable; they are to go on in perpetuity. I have provided some translated samples about how we have come to be on the earth and how the Good Mind came back to our nations. My intent is that even such a small sampling of what our ways are about and how much beauty, pragmatic social and environmental cohesion they hold may help to foster the desire needed to draw our people back to our source of origin.

Our epochal narratives show us that through the act of creating human beings, who *Teharonhiawá:kon* imbued with the very essence of creation, the same essence of creation that exists in creation itself. We carry this essence within ourselves, both physically and spiritually; we just need to recognize it to reconnect to it. We are to have love for ourselves and each other; we have the duty to be happy. The duty to be happy alludes both to not being greedy and to being satisfied with what is given to us to live upon physically and spiritually, emotionally and mentally. As well our days here upon the earth are limited by our mortality. We have been given both ceremonial and secular ways of expressing our satisfaction for our existence and that extends to all the things that contribute to that existence. We

can see when the Good Mind came back to us that when even a portion of the people stray from these foundational concepts that the results can be physically, socially, and in modern times, environmentally destructive. Yet, we retain within ourselves that essence of creation that allowed even a cannibal to come back to our creator's intent.

When we begin to align our minds in such a way that we come back to our source we will we begin to understand how we ought to think about language reclamation and language revitalization. When our minds and actions align with *Onkwehonwehnéha'* ways of being will provide us with the deliberative powers to be able to sort out what are and what are not healthy approaches to teaching, learning and appropriate use of western technology. This would at the very least begin to clear the road we are on of some of the obstacles for those who are coming behind us and whose faces remain to come towards us from under the ground.

Ì:'I enkatatká:raton'/I will tell a story about myself

Tsi nitewaké:non shikekshà:'a/Where I come from in my childhood

I don't remember when I realized that I'm *Onkwehón:we* in an ethnic sense. It was sometime in my early childhood when I made this realization, as well as realizing that the place I live in is a place that other *Onkwehón:we* live in. I do remember though that I had a feeling of sorts that there was this contrast between what I felt was modern *Onkwehón:we* vs. historic *Onkwehón:we.* I guess in hindsight I was too young to make the connection that these were the early inklings that being *Onkwehón:we* is more than just an ethnic identity and material culture.

The only language I spoke fluently from childhood till I began my in-earnest language learning of *Kanien'kéha*' at age eighteen was English. My earliest recollection of learning any *Kanien'kéha'* words was before I began kindergarten while my father and mother and I lived at my grandmother's (my father's mother's) home in the village, probably around 1979 or 1980. I remember being told the difference between *tósha*/*don't* and *tásha(wh)*/*bring it here* by my late mother (which in and of itself is remarkable as she is an Anglo Canadian). The next major memory I have is of my late cousin Joel coming home from kindergarten and singing the corn bread song, a children's song in *Kanien'kéha'* that commemorates a still-popular traditional food. I was instantly enamored of the song, the language and of my cousin's ability to sing it. I remember my cousin's mother, my Aunt Diane, soothing me telling how I'd be able to learn it as well when I went into the kindergarten class. It seems to me that even at that young age of four or five there was an emerging connection to our *Onkwehón:we* language and culture.

By the time I had started kindergarten the first pilot project *Kanien'kéha' immersion* class was starting: my parents tried to have me enrolled. I can remember them speaking about it. One of the criteria for enrollment was that there had to be at least one *Kanien'kéha*' speaker living in the home. My mother, being an Anglo Canadian, was not a speaker and my father and his siblings were not taught their language by their father (who I've been told spoke not only *Kanien'kéha*', English and French, but

some Italian as well). Their mother, who told me later on in life, “I can understand some but I can’t talk,” wasn’t able, or at least felt unable, to teach them. So *Kanien’kéha* immersion for me would have to wait until I was an eighteen-year-old kindergarten student.

By the time I was born in 1975 the first L1 English-speaking generation of *Kahnawa’kehró:non* was well into their adult, child-producing years and their parents’ generation, our last Mother Tongue speaking generation (Beatty, 1974, p. 8) found themselves in a crisis that for the first time in anyone’s knowledge in our history, our language had become in danger of being lost, as their children and their children’s children could no longer speak it.

By the time I had begun elementary school, the adult and elder generation had set *Kahnawà:ke’s* initial trajectory in language revitalization by introducing *Kanien’kéha’ langua*ge as a classroom subject. I don’t recall during my elementary school years if our *Kanien’kéha’* class was daily. I do remember that I enjoyed the vocabulary I was learning and that it felt right.

There are only a few memories that stand out for me relating to my time in elementary school and the *Kaien’kéha* language. The first is the only short sentence I can remember learning. It was close to Christmas and the vocabulary was Christmas themed. Our teacher was the late *Kaieríthon* Josephine Horne, and she taught me the sentence: *Tewakatonhontsón:ni Sánta Krá:hs aontaháhawe’*/*I want Santa Claus to bring it.* The next memory that stands out in my mind’s eye is when *Kanatíshon* Glenda Deer, a woman who would figure prominently in my adult learning, came to my class. In my memory I believe she was a substitute for our regular *Kanien’kéha* teacher as she wasn’t familiar to me. She spoke to us entirely in *Kanien’kéha*. I remember feeling lost about what she was saying and being unsure of what she wanted or what we were going to do. We wound up playing color and shape bingo and even though I couldn’t understand the words she used outside of the names of colors and shapes I was able to get the gist of what was going on. I believe that this is my first experience of consciously negotiating meaning in my own language.

Throughout my childhood and pre-high school years I can remember hearing the *Kanien'kéha* language being spoken by the then elder generation in just about all of *Kahnawà:ke's* public spaces, stores, restaurants, the post office, the funeral homes and at the Longhouse. I remember on Halloweens going into people's homes and hearing "*ónhka thí:ken?*/*who's that*?" or "*ónhka nè:'e?/who's that there?"* followed by laughter and conversation in *Kanien'kéha* that I couldn't understand. A popular local restaurant, Rabaska, had a children's special on Fridays, a slice of pizza, a fry and soda at a discounted price. Us children had to order on the take-out side of the restaurant which had a few small tables, just enough for two people to eat at. We used to call it "the men's side." Often there'd be older retired men sitting there, eating their lunch and conversing, often in what sounded to me like low and mumble-like old man *Kanien'kéha*.

Being a raised as a Long House person I attended the ceremonies at the Longhouse. While the only language used by the chiefs and speakers was *Kanien'kéha*', there was still many elderly and then close to mid-age and middle-age speakers present and in between the speeches the sounds of friendly visiting in our language could be heard. One of the Wolf clan chiefs *Tekaronhió:ken* Frank Jacobs Jr. was the culture teacher for the Longhouse students at Kateri Indian day school, on Mondays when the Christian students would attend their respective religious classes. *Tekaronhió:ken* gave us one of the first language learning strategies. He encouraged us to listen to the speakers in the Longhouse even if we didn't speak fluently but to listen for any words that we might recognize. He told us that that would be a good start trying to understand. I remember vividly liking the sometimes-pungent smell of the *oien'kwa'ón:we*/*Indian Tobacco* as the chiefs and speakers burned it and spoke words of thanksgiving, and, sometimes trying to listen for words I might know. Mostly though I was excited to hear the ceremonial songs and participating in some of the dances.

While we still lived in the village at my grandmother's, one of our neighbors, the late Baba John Curotte, who was a Turtle chief in the Longhouse, and his wife Grace were raising their grandson and

the language they spoke to each other in was *Kanien'kéha'.* I spent a lot of time there playing with their grandson and hearing them conversing softly to each other or either one of them addressing their grandson and asking him something that I didn't understand*. Kanien'kéha'* seemed to be all over the place to me as child, yet outside of our classroom learning it was more of a background than part of my own person. I believe I was in the third grade when what we called the "up-the-hill school" (*Karonhianónhnha'* school), which until then was grades three to six, became a *Kanien'kéha*' immersion school and those of us at Kateri school would have to finish our elementary school learning there.

Sometime before my parents and newborn sister and I moved to what's known as the "farm" area of *Kahnawà:ke* in the fall of 1983, my father made a bow and arrow set for me. I spent a lot of time playing with them in the woods around our new home that was heated by a wood stove and had no running water or electricity. I played cowboys and Indians or soldiers and Indians; I only ever played the part of the Indians and was consciously aware that I had to fake talk in Indian my end of my play dialogs other than the few words I knew. I knew that I should be able to speak our language if I believed that is who I am.

Sha'kenekenhterón:ta'ne'/when I became a young man

I began high school at the *Kahnawà:ke* Survival School (KSS) during the school year of 1988/89 at the age of thirteen. KSS was founded in1978 for high school students in *Kahnawà:ke* in response to Quebec's Bill 101 to give our students a school where their own culture and language would be the foundation of their education (Stacey, 2016, p. 10). Even at that young age I was beginning to be aware of our political, social and economic position vis-à-vis the dominant Canadian society and what it's like to be a colonized people. My father was heavily involved with the Longhouse and Warrior's Society so I had many opportunities to hear people who know our history and culture in addition to learning about them at KSS. During the summer of 1990, the so-called "Oka crisis," I picked up arms along with many other

Kahnawa'kehró:non, both young and old, in support of the people of *Kanehsatà:ke* who were attacked with gun-fire and tear gas by the Quebec provincial police for blocking the destruction of their actively in-use cemetery by a golf club expansion. By the time school started back, a little late that September, both *Kahnawà:ke* and *Kanehsatà:ke* had been under siege by the Canadian armed forces for two months. There was constant harassment and arrests of our people by both the Canadian armed forces until their departure and by the Quebec provincial police for several years. Both in mind and in action, I had by the end of the so-called "Oka crisis" become a *Kanien'kehá:ka* nationalist who felt determined to fight for his people.

Throughout my time in high school *Kanien'kéha*' remained my favorite subject and was one of the only classes that I applied myself in. During those high school years there was a noticeable lessening of *Kanien'kéha'* being spoken in the public places I was used to hearing them in my childhood (excepting the Longhouse). Not so much a decrease in places but a decrease in volume of people speaking it. There was, in those early 1990's, just after the troubles of 1990, a permeable sense of pride in being *Onkwehón:we* in *Kahnawà:ke* and a kind of a kick-ass nationalist sentiment. Yet despite fancying myself a *Kanien'kehá:ka* nationalist, ready to fight with force of arms for my people, I still couldn't see clearly the deep connection to revitalizing our language and its connections deep into the culture, history and life. Nor did I yet see how my responsibility to defend our nation is one and the same as my responsibility to my culture and language. My eyes would soon be opened.

By the spring of 1993 my grade eleven class was preparing to graduate high school. I had applied and was accepted to Champlain College Lenoxville. One day in mid or late May I was hanging around with a group of friends. It really was a beautiful spring day, the sun was shining the temperature was warm enough for shorts, my friends who smoked cigarettes were enjoying their smoke. We were just sitting outside the cafeteria talking about future plans and whatever else 17-year-olds talked about back

then. As the conversation turned towards graduation and that we'd be finished high school a friend said in a resigned voice "well, no more Mohawk I guess."

It hit me like a ton of bricks, the entirety of my time in school from Indian day school to then I'd had what I seen as my only opportunity to learn *Kanien'kéha',* and that opportunity was a few short weeks from ending. I was realizing that we'd lost many speakers since I had become a teenager, it was pretty much a given then that any elderly person who died in those days was a speaker. Even the immersion school kids once they'd start high school would say that they seemed no longer be able speak like they did while they were children, with that and our ageing speaker population the conclusion I reached was that our language seemed to be headed for the graveyard. If I wanted to learn more the responsibility would rest on my own shoulders. It took all of about a second for all of these thoughts to register, it was simultaneously heavy and foreboding yet still had a slight trace of the feelings of both freedom and adventure.

I graduated from *Kahnawà:ke* Survival School in June 1993. In late August I began my social sciences program at Champlain College Lenoxville. I attended Champlain College for about two months or so. I was roommates with my late cousin Joel Montour and our friend and fellow *Kahnawa'kehró:non*, Neil Cross. I enjoyed living away from home for that time and the freedom that came with it, yet I found no real connection and or interest in the subjects or material I was studying. I felt like a foreigner learning about his host country. I had no desire to get a degree in any subject, my only desire was to be me, *Kahrhó:wane*, even though in retrospect I only partially understood what that meant at the time and that is something that has and is evolving the more I understand our cultural ways through the lens of our language.

I made up my mind I wasn't going to stay at college any longer. I don't remember what day of the week it was I called home and told my parents I wasn't happy there and that I was coming home. While they couldn't stop me from withdrawing from college my father asked me bluntly "well, what do

you want to do? You can't just lay on the couch all day." I told him that I didn't know what I wanted to do but that I did know I wanted to learn Mohawk. My father at that time was employed as a teacher at an alternative elementary school the Indian Way School which was initially started as a high school by the Longhouse people in response to Quebec's Bill 101. He told me that they have a nursery and kindergarten *Kanien'kéha*' immersion program and that he'd ask if I could volunteer there and if they'd agree that'd be an acceptable substitute for wage work or school. I didn't hold any expectations or hopes as to whether they'd allow me volunteer or not. It seemed a rather far out idea to me at the time that an adult would learn *Kanien'kéha*' as a second language, and I was all right with getting a job somewhere and working. I wanted to be a man not just some lazy ass who mooches from his parents when he is able to help his self. The next day we spoke again and he told me they were all right with me volunteering and seeing how it works out, there was an air of temporary-ness to it in my mind with that "see how it works out" part. I packed my belongings that week, and when Friday came I went home.

On the following Monday I went over to the Indian Way School to meet with the director, the late Diane Delaronde. We walked over to the house that was housing the immersion program about 200 or so feet down the road from the main school. She introduced me to the two teachers, the aforementioned, *Kanatíshon* Glenda Deer and the late *Karen'nátha*' Tessie Stacey. There was another teacher who would come in later on, the wife of the aforementioned *Tekaronhió:ken*, *Konwatièn:se* Carol-lee. I don't recall what the teachers were doing after our initial introduction but the students were eating their morning snack in the lunchroom an addition on the back side of the small house. As I walked down the three steps into their little lunchroom the sounds of small children laughing and speaking *Kanien'kéha'* saying who knows what my initial thought was, "I'm never even going fucken speak Mohawk as good as these five- and six-year old's".

Fortunately, I was quite wrong. I was never an official student of the teachers meaning they never had any planned lessons for me to learn. Each day I showed up and helped with the children with

as much as I understood. I mean it wasn't rocket science after all, when they had to write, color, use scissors, etc. I was able to assist them with these manual skills. When the teachers were doing oral lessons with them I repeated the same rotes they did. I noticed quite quickly that even though I didn't understand the vast majority of what the teachers said as the tasks were aimed at children I was able to pick up the cues. If they'd say "*hao' sewakóha ne ionhsohkwahrhosthákhwa*"/*go get the crayons* and were holding crayons, well, I got the gist of what they wanted. In this way I was learning and acquiring language in a manner that is not dissimilar to how naturally acquired language is gained. I would also study at home using *Mohawk: A Teaching Grammar* (Deering & Delisle, 1992) I'd try to do the lessons to the best of my ability in the chapters, yet found myself not understanding much of the explanations that went with those lessons. I didn't pay it much mind though as I was happy with the way learning was proceeding.

By the end of that first year I could understand and speak at least as well as the children who I thought I'd never speak as well as. My comprehension though was somewhat higher than theirs. After the end of my second year both my speaking and comprehension was well past the students' and I could even run some of the basic lessons for the teachers. It felt wonderful to be learning and being able to actually communicate with the teachers and students, although limited to language that was used in the classroom and possibly a little past survival language. The class was entirely in *Kanien'kéha* unless there'd be some danger where the priority would be the children's safety. The teachers were not only reminding the students to "*Onkwehonwehnéha satá:ti*/*talk Onkwehonwehnéha*" but also repeating all children's questions or statements back to them in our language, a very mentally taxing process when done all day every day. As my language was still very basic if I didn't know how to say something in *Kanien'kéha'* I kept my mouth closed, I wasn't going to expect any different treatment. After the children would go home for the day only then would I ask for some clarity if visual clues didn't work and/or I wasn't able to figure out the meaning of a word based on its context of use. I made no notes

those first two years and just rolled with the learning. The teachers told me that that it was a good thing to have a man in the class so that the children could hear not only the common things that are spoken about by both together but the unique things that each brings from a cultural perspective. That was also the reason they had two teachers so that in addition to direct teaching the children would be exposed to natural spontaneous conversation. *Kanatíshon*, *Karen'nátha*' and *Konwatièn:se* were very patient with my mispronunciations and at times awkward English based constructions said in *Kanien'kéha'*.

From my third to my fifth and final year at the Indian Way School we moved from the little satellite house to an addition onto the main school. I really preferred the home atmosphere of the small house compared to the large classroom and lunchroom of our new abode. I was learning fast by my third year I found myself able to speak about things beyond the classroom and survival language I was able to have not too in-depth conversations about things that interested me and I was able to understand more than ever and also to understand explanations of meanings of words in our language without having to go into English.

Through my fourth and fifth years I made it point to take notes, in particular when the all-*Kanien'kéha'* noon hour talk show would be on Wednesdays and *Kanatíshon* would say "oh, I haven't heard that word since I was a child." The all *Kanien'kéha'* Wednesday noon hour talk show is a radio show hosted on K-103.5 FM, the local radio station in *Kahnawà:ke,* featuring two hosts where the programing which is spontaneous conversation is entirely in *Kanien'kéha'*. It has been aired continuously since, to my recollection, the late 1980's. Archived episodes can be listened to on Sound Cloud on the *Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotióhkwa's* page (https://soundcloud.com/korlcc). While listening to it, I was getting a strong sense that there was more to speaking a language than I knew. How come sometimes when I'd ask someone a question they'd say "o, go and ask so and so *né: sénha ionhrónkha'"* / "go and ask so and so, *they're more fluent*". I thought it odd that someone could be *sénha ionhrónkha'.* I thought isn't a speaker just a speaker? I had by now also made it a point with whoever I knew who was

a speaker that I'd only talk to them in *Kanien'kéha'*. This led to some odd looks from people who I didn't know very well when I'd speak to them in *Kanien'kéha'* and they'd only answer in English. I'd figure out that outside of those involved in teaching that most of our speakers were only used to speaking in our language to their own peer group and they found it odd for a young man to seemingly come out of nowhere talking *Kanien'kéha'*.

Through those five years at the Indian Way School I learned quite a bit about how to learn my language. I discovered that I have an internal monologue and that if I could internally voice thoughts that I knew how to say in *Kanien'kéha'* it greatly aided me in not only remembering new vocabulary it helped me to retain previously learned vocabulary. I found in the library at the *Kahnawà:ke Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa'* Language and Cultural Center photo copies of old texts in our language written by our own people, by priests and also by linguists. I became a voracious reader of all that I could get my hands on. The linguistic papers with transcriptions of spontaneous and formal speaking would often have a line of *Kanien'kéha'* text followed by a line of the morphological breakdown of the words (which seemed like so much mumbo-jumbo to me) then a word for word translation and lastly a free translation.

These texts showed me that our speakers express their thoughts in a word order that usually differs from English. While I sort of already knew that, actually seeing the word order differences written down really drove the point home. From all of the texts I found and used, and particularly those having sentences, I figured out that I could take a particle or word or portion of a sentence and try to use it in another sentence of my own creation. With many trials and errors of this my subconscious was able to recognize patterns of focus and syntax that I could not consciously recognize, yet I recognized that I was I starting to get things more right than wrong when moving out of using rote responses and phrases. The most important things I learned in those years are that if I wanted *akahrónkha'ne'/for me to become a speaker* I'd have to remember not only a lot of words but how, when and why those words are used,

and to set aside my ego and use my language as much as possible with speakers and listen with intention to them to get where I wanted to go. When one thinks about learning a second language and begins to realise the vast space the language occupies in communication, whether through speaking, listening, reading or other visual clues, the task can seem overwhelming. The only thing that one can logically do is accept that that is how it is and, when you can honestly say I've done what I'm capable of doing today then that's the best outcome possible.

During my years at the Indian Way School from both my mentors at the Indian Way School and other people in *Kahnawà:ke* I felt like I was not only learning our language but about our culture through our language and how the one without the other is incomplete. Those early years of my language and cultural learning were really beginning to shape how I was understanding us from our own point of view. People began to recognize me as a speaker, or at least a budding speaker. There would be times when I'd be out in our community and I'd see someone who I knew and we'd speak to each other in *Kanien'kéha* and when there'd be other speakers present they'd tell them "*Onkwehonwehnéha tsthárhas thí: rahrónkha'/talk to him in Onkwehonwehnéha he's a speaker* or *Onkwehonwehnéha tsthárhas thí: rateweiénhstha' nè:'e*"*/talk to him in Onkwehonwehnéha he's studying*. Yet in those days the effects of colonialization on language revitalization were far more present than they are now. I was told more than a few times by people "oh you're learning Mohawk, well, you'll never learn it all." My first thought in response was always "well I don't know all of English but I still speak it." My intent at learning back then was simply to be a speaker, whatever that meant. I just wanted to fulfill my own personal responsibility in that since I say that I'm *Kanien'kehá:ka* I should at least be able to speak it, and not just figure out language saving strategies and methodologies. I didn't see that the trajectory of trying to fulfill my own responsibility was putting me on a course to being a language reclaimationist.

I also began in those late 90's to speak in our Longhouse. At times when there'd be a social dance they'd ask me to "open" it with the *Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen* (a thanksgiving address that goes

from the earth to beyond the sky). When our regular Elder speakers weren't there or were running late, they'd ask me to announce the singers for a dance. I remember rather clearly the first time I did this for one of our public ceremonies, I was sitting next to *Awenrathon'kénha* (the late *Awenráthon*) Joe Deer. He asked if I would and I was reluctant. I felt that my language wasn't up to par compared to his or that of *Otsistenhawihkénha* (the late *Otsistenhá:wi*) Frank Natowe who sat across from us on the Turtle clan side. I had never spoken at one of our festivals before and it felt like there'd be a million people who'd be looking at me. I don't really remember whether or not we had a large crowd that day, but it wasn't a small one. I was beginning to realize the weight our speakers had been carrying. He told me in *Kanien'kéha'* "if you get stuck I'll help you". I agreed; the announcement was made and I began to speak. I did get stuck somewhere along the way and he politely and discreetly helped me.

As our speakers experience health problems, I began to be asked more and more to take on speaking roles in our Longhouse, a role I felt I was too young to do. At times I would attend ceremonies at another Longhouse to hear other speakers, but in truth I didn't only do it for altruistic reasons. I knew that there'd be less of a chance of them asking me to speak publicly about things I felt my oral proficiency couldn't handle and to things I felt I did not yet understand thoroughly enough to be the one to speak for it. In addition to this I was young, and despite learning and trying to live our own culture I was none the less caught up in the modern party scene of my age. I used the excuse that I was "old enough to know better but young enough not to care," and, while that helped to ease my ego I knew it wasn't right and that I'd have to make a choice about how I was going to live with what I was learning. As our Chiefs and speakers became more and more unavailable due to ill health or began to die my public ceremonial speaking roles in our Longhouse increased in volume and scope. I was beginning to see that my personal responsibility of learning our language and culture wasn't limited to my own person.

Shontakatáhsawen' akatonhnhí:sake'/when I began to seek a living

At a Sunday afternoon lacrosse game early in the summer of 1998 I had yet to find summer employment when I was offered a job for the next day in the iron working trade. I took it and ended my time at the Indian Way School. The money was good, there was no risk of fines and/or imprisonment like in the tobacco trade. I was young, and in a hurry to build a house and live my life in our language and by all the ways that I had been learning about what it means to be an *Onkwehón:we*, at least as I understood it then.

During the four years that I remained employed in the structural iron trade while I was no longer in an immersion environment my language none the less increased through interaction with speakers. I thought I was in the early mid-stages of being able to both be understood and communicate with speakers. I was forced by a lack of lexiconic knowledge to use circumlocution and often understand their corrective feedback while staying in our own language. Through my interaction with speakers, written texts and digital texts in an emerging internet I also knew that there was much that I didn't know. I had no conscious grasp of grammar, syntax and why and how our speakers would create various constructions. Sometimes I would know most if not all the words of a new to me utterance yet the meaning of the utterance when explained to me in either language wouldn't mean what I thought it would. It was as if the sum total meaning of an utterance was more than the sum of its parts.

By the year 2000, I was dating the woman who would be become the mother of my children and wife; we had dated off and on from 1993 through 1999. In late 2001 we were expecting our first child to be born. One night while at a tavern in Bay-Ridge, Brooklyn, New York I was talking with a friend of mine whose then-fiancé is one of the only set of siblings in our age demographic who is a fluent *Kanien'kéha'* speaker and raising their children in *Kanien'kéha'*. I guess he understood how important the language is to me while at the same time knowing how much I was enjoying and doing well in the ironwork trade.

He told me something to the effect that, if I wanted our child to speak our language I'd probably have to give up ironworking and stay home.

I thought that that might not have to happen as my wife understood some and spoke some having gone to immersion school as a child and that we'd be able to work it out somehow. I don't remember exactly when in her pregnancy I told her that I could not only speak in our language to our child but also that I would have to do the same with her. I am very fortunate that she understood my logic and agreed. I think that her belief in our success and dedication is what has really contributed to both our and our children's language successes.

I feel that there is one thing that I must make a mention of here: the re-starting of our relationship in *Kanien'kéha'* was at times extremely challenging. In hindsight there is so much more that I could have done to make our transition from English to *Kanien'kéha'* better, but hind sight is 20/20 and with us being, as far as I know, the first couple in recent times in *Kahnawà:ke* to move from L1 English speakers to *Kanien'kéha* speakers and raising their children as *Kanien'kéha* Mother Tongue speakers there was many unknowns to us about language learning, teaching and revitalization in one's own home, all of which is encapsulated in the single word *Onkwehonwehnéha'*. One of our conversations about enacting all of these things was about what may happen when they grow-up and may no-longer want to do these things or believe in this way. The only answer I had and continue to have is we're doing right by our culture and giving them a lot of the things we never had the opportunity to just grow into naturally from childhood into adulthood. They would at least not be able to honestly say "well, we didn't grow up that way, so we don't know" or "nobody every told me that", they wouldn't have the same reasons that we had for not knowing about *Onkwehonhnéha'.*

Coincidentally in 2001, the *Kahnawà:ke Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa'* Language and Cultural Center (KORLCC) began their pilot year of the *Kanien'kéha Ratiwennahní:rats/they are strengthening the Kanien'kéha'language*. Initially this was a one-year program for adults who had some speaking ability to

help address the number of teachers retiring from language immersion classrooms in the community. While expecting our daughter in 2004 my wife was able to be part of the second cohort of the program; it greatly boosted her language abilities.

As far as raising our children in *Onkwehonwehnéha*, I can only say that if you want to know how well you speak a language you can find out by speaking to mono-lingual children with whom using English isn't an option. It has and continues to show me where I have gaps to fill in understanding and lexicon. Their naturally acquired language understanding amazes me some times. There has been times where only in my recent adult learning that I've understood things that, when I ask them if they understand, they understand not only the word or words but how the meaning is more than the sum of its parts. One of the biggest takeaways I got from my time in the ironworking trade is at times someone else's life will literally be in your hands and yours will be in theirs. This can create situations where either cowardice or courage can be exercised. In situations like that one has to put aside any personal prejudices one has. In such a situation success, severe-injury or death may be the result of the exercise of your exercising or not exercising courage. It is such a simple concept; yet, just because it's simple that doesn't automatically equate to being easy.

In 2003 the boom-bust cycle of ironwork was at the bust part, for me at least. One day I was at home when a couple of the workers for the Healing Lodge program of the *Kahnawà:ke Shakotiia'takéhnhahs* Community Services (KSCS) paid me a visit asking if I am part of a certain Medicine society, I answered that I wasn't but offered up as to who I knew that is. Later on that summer one of them called me up asking if I'd be interested in doing an interview for a job there with them. They explained briefly during the call what the program offered: counseling services from our own *Onkwehón:we* perspective and appropriate ceremonial help for community members. I went for the interview and was hired shortly after.

My job title was Traditional Consultant. I was recruited specifically to work with the men who were their ceremonial workers and counselors due to my language ability. Overtime I also became involved in the counseling aspect of the job. While there was few clients that I worked with that were *Kanien'kéha'* speakers there was some, and, since in our counseling services we were using our own ways of understanding or at least the English language versions of them I made a lot of effort to ask our speakers what kind of language use to talk about spiritual, emotional and ceremonial topics. These conversations helped me to see how much meaning and cultural concepts and life is embedded not only in words but how words carry cultural meanings that often get lost in translation sometimes even simple things. I began in 2004 to build our home, a square-timbered piece-on-piece log house. I worked at building our house mostly over summers, weekends or whenever the weather permitted doing all the structural work myself.

One hot summer day of my first summer of house building as I was raising the logs on the north-ish facing wall being about close to three feet high, I sat in the shade of the logs to take a little break. As I sat in the shade drinking some water and looking at the logs I had raised and the stacks of them in the yard I realized that these trees had their life taken from them and were never spoken to about what they'd be used for or why the logger had cut them. I didn't feel right about it. I decided that I'd burn some tobacco to thank them for their lives and explain who I am and why I had them cut for me. It was way too hot to make a fire. I remembered that in my car was a small clay pipe that was given to me when I had begun work at the Healing Lodge. I decided to use that to burn my tobacco; when I inhaled the *oien'kwa'ón:we*/*Original Tobacco* I immediately felt kind of tipsy or somewhat buzzed, not in the same way one would feel from alcohol or marijuana with slowed thoughts, just physically. My mind felt incredibly clear as to what I was doing, I felt a connection to creation itself. Later on that summer I was speaking to a friend from Oneida, Ontario, an older man, telling him about my experience. He just smiled and chuckled a bit saying, "that that's one of things that that *oien'kwa'ón:we* is for, to help clear

your mind so you can have good thoughts." I keep up this practice of smoking *oien'kwa'ón:we* to the present both on my own ,such as while writing this project, or with friends when we visit with each other socially or to talk about our ways and our responsibilities as *Onkwehón:we*.

We'd move into our new home in 2007. Our third child would be born later that fall after our move. His name *Lanusísa'ahs'*/*he completes the house* commemorating the completion of what we started as a family, our home. My job title as a Traditional Support Consultant would change to Traditional Support Counselor in 2007. I'd stay in this job position until the year 2012. Our people carry a lot of spiritual, emotional weight from the historic and current colonial polices of the Crown and the United States. My time at the Healing Lodge would greatly inform my perspective in my current teaching practices in helping adult learners in beginning to overcome some of the weight of our collective colonial baggage. The learning of one's *Onkwehón:we* language as an L2 speaker carries remarkable similarities to the vulnerabilities to being counseled. One may feel completely emotionally overwhelmed by the immensity of what one has to learn and to accept what one doesn't know. This requires approaches that are intentional to not overwhelm the learner and that support the learner to take ownership of their language journey while being supported and to prepare them for the time when their program support will wane. This requires as much openness, empathy, clarity and honesty on the part of a teacher as it does a counsellor. All of the above mentioned require both of a teacher and learner strong reflective practices. For those interested, Jacob Manatowa-Bailey's (2024) PhD thesis, *Rethink Revitalization: Wellbeing within Indigenous Language Revitalization,* speaks extensively to intergenerational trauma's impact on Indigenous Revitalization practitioners.

In 2011 my wife and I had noticed a decline in our two oldest children's spoken *Kanien'kéha'* proficiency despite them being in a *Kanien'kéha'* immersion program. They were picking up how their peers who were primarily English speakers were trying to speak *Kanien'kéha'* or just speaking to their best ability in *Kanien'kéha'*. They were just in their human nature communicating with their peers and

wanted to talk like them or were not able to discern that at times they were speaking in English or in a mish mash of *Kanien'kéha'* and English. Yet the decline was noticeable enough to cause us worry and to make the decision to keep them home. My wife stayed home with and homeschooled them for the school year of 2011-2012. In 2012, she decided that she wanted to go back to work, after ten years of being home and also realizing that with our two oldest children she was reaching the ceiling of her linguistic abilities. This didn't slow down anything with our children and I, nor was it so eventful to our children as she still stayed primarily in *Kanien'kéha* with our children. When she'd reach a point that she needed to go to English she did. She had applied for and accepted a one-year contract. I applied for a leave of absence from my job which was granted. I was to stay home to homeschool our children. After that first year we agreed that she would stay at work and I would stay home and homeschool our children.

I stayed home with them for the next three years and though I write homeschooling there was very little in the way of western schooling practices or curriculum. This was intentional on my part. My thoughts were why would I continue to inculcate (or, at minimum, give priority to) our children into the Euro-North American model of education when that same model has and continues to contribute to the dismemberment of our culture. I had no desire to make our home into a school classroom with the only difference being the location of the classroom. The priority was to try and allow them to develop naturally as the *Onkwehón:we* people they were born to be. However, we did do some age appropriate math, reading and writing throughout our weeks as both their mother and I both recognized that those skills would not only be helpful to them in their lives but necessary in today's age. The majority of the time we were simply living and taking part in daily and seasonal activities both *Onkwehón:we* and modern. My thoughts were that there is no danger in them missing out on much of the Western Education as it is in no danger of being lost, yet our language and ways without being used in as much as we can are in danger, so, that's what we did.

From spring until fall we kept busy preparing, planting, tending and harvesting our gardens to raising farm animals and butchering game I would hunt and sometimes trap. During the winter and into early spring we used archival traditional stories both in English and *Kanien'kéha'*, the English ones I'd translate for them as I'd read them. We'd use plenty of English language story books as well with me translating them or them practicing their English reading skills. I was never averse to them knowing how to read or speak English though I was clear that our language is *Kanien'kéha'* and that that is the language of our home. Our children, by now aged ten, eight and four respectively, never rebelled that our language was *Kanien'kéha*. When they were with people who they knew spoke it they spoke it, when they were amongst those who didn't, they figured it out on their own or with guidance from my wife and I. We'd also tap maple trees to make syrup and sugar when the early spring would come. Our day-to-day routines would consist of doing all the things it takes to keep a household running: with three children home full time, this can be quite time consuming and exhausting. When my kids would be playing, I kept up with my own cultural and language learning which was greatly aided by being able to find archival materials on the internet, digital recordings, and being able to speak with other *Onkwehón:we* via social media and being able to give and receive copies of ceremonial language and songs through email. The speed and ease of communication via the internet increased the speed and scope of my own learning.

To a certain extent our kids were what is called *Tehatinó:taton*/*Down fended*, a cultural practice of isolating children to keep them from the negative social and spiritual impacts of society. It wasn't actually that, but I did make intentional effort to keep them distant from what I thought and still feel are the negative aspects of the dominant society such as conspicuous consumption along with the inequality and environmental damage it creates and how that filters into our own society: not just the overt things that people would commonly think of such as too much screen time or the conspicuous consumption inherent in capitalism, but things that aren't usually thought of as culturally destructive

like the food we eat, how instant gratification isn't always the best gratification. The *Kanien'kéha'* I used was never dumbed down but it was the same language adults use (to my best ability at the time) although age appropriate as the case may have been.

To a certain extent I was living the dream. I was doing the majority of the things that I felt would strengthen my family, culture and our language, yet there was one egotistic area that I felt I wasn't and that was being the bread winner, making a cash salary. Although there was many times that the only things in our meals that weren't the product of my and or my kids work was the spices in a particular meal, I wasn't paying for anything; my wife was. It was a terribly heavy blow to my manhood as it was. I felt I was sacrificing part of the essence of my manhood; it was a very hard thing for me to reconcile. The choice was to go back to work and our kids go back to school with me sacrificing what I believed was that right thing for me to do for them and fulfilling my cultural responsibilities, or, appease my ego so I could make money to feel like the man. It would be a while before I chose to go back to work; it was a decision that was not motivated by a lack of me making money. What I was doing was more important to me than getting paid.

One time some type of summer program from Oneida, Ontario came by to check out what we were doing here on our little Home-School farmstead. A couple of times the *Kaien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotihtióhkwa* Language and Cultural Center (KORLCC) *Kanien'kéha' Ratiwennahní:rats* class visited while out on bicycle excursions. Over two years or so some of the students of the *Kanien'kéha' Ratiwennahní:rats* class would call asking if they could have a "speaker visit" with me as part of their program requirement to visit with fluent Elder speakers. I was a little surprised as, while I considered that *kahrónkha'*/*I'm a speaker*, I didn't feel my language was such that students should use their speaker visit times with me rather than an Elder. During these visits with the *Ratiwennahní:rats* students I was quite surprised and impressed at how well some of them spoke. I felt that the control they were able to exercise over grammar and morphology was very impressive after not even two full

years of learning. Even those whose language I considered at a lower level than their peers was none-the-less impressive. They were using the morphological patterns that their teachers were teaching to them in order to know how to manipulate tense, gender, verbs, nouns and aspect in a systematic way. Some of them before the end of their two-year program I felt were equal in terms of applying morphological/grammatical concepts far-far beyond what I was able to do after the same amount of learning. My thoughts were that there's got to be something to what or how ever these people are teaching over there that's working, otherwise these students of theirs wouldn't be able to talk at the levels they do. I inquired about what and how it was being taught. I knew they were teaching linguistic concepts, but I was honestly quite lost as to what all of the linguistic things they spoke about meant and how, when and where it applied to our language. It seemed far too complex for me to understand and yet I knew it wasn't, but without any real instruction on the processes they were teaching I was lost. I began to reexamine the linguistic papers I had. As well, my wife helped me using some of the materials she had from her time in the *Ratiwennahní:rats* program. Slowly I began to see that our language is more morphologically patternable than I had known, there was some patterns that I realized I had absorbed subconsciously through oral transmission and others where maybe lack of exposure left gaps.

During the same timeframe a friend of mine one day asked if I'd be interested in taking a grammar class she was organizing with a relative of a mutual friend who has an academic background in linguistics as well as being a Mother Tongue speaker. My friend was quite surprised that, despite how well people considered I spoke, I had no formal concept of grammar. She asked how I knew how I'd say any given thing without know consciously what morphemes I'd be adding or subtracting et cetera. I said that I don't know, I just try to remember how I heard people say it and when I came across a new word I'd just think about it and try to manipulate it by cross referencing with a word that I thought had the same pattern. The class was over a few nights over a couple of weeks. Our instructor taught us a style

that she had developed herself. It differed from what I'd come to know but it was close enough to close the gaps that I recognized I had at the time.

In 2015 our last child *Tehawennáhsen* was born and our whole family would be home together for eight months that year. During that year I became aware that there was posting for an instructor position for the *Ratiwennahní:rats* program a two year adult language immersion program offered by the *Kahnawà:ke Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa* Language and Cultural Center, began in 2002 for "the advancement of spoken language proficiency, empowering community to participate and contribute to the maintenance and vitality of Onkwehonwehnéha"(DeCaire, 2023, p. 82) I knew that there was good things happening there at *Ratiwennahní:rats* with our language and I wanted to be part of what was going on. I wanted to and felt obligated to share what I knew and was learning about in terms of *Onkwehonwehnéha'* outside of my household. My wife knowing my feelings encouraged me to apply. We spoke about it and agreed that our kids would have to go to school as she was returning to work. I applied but was not the successful candidate chosen. The following spring, 2016, the job was posted again, this time for both instructor positions. I applied again, this time I was given an interview for the posting and an oral proficiency interview (OPI) based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) requirements (https://www.actfl.org/assessments/postsecondary-assessments/opi). Part of the application package was that I create a resumé and submit an example of a lesson plan. I had never done either of those two white collar things before. My wife helped me with the resumé and I researched how to make a lesson plan on the web and created one based on how stress is assigned in *Kanien'kéha'* words. Again, we spoke about that if I were to get the job, our kids, now aged fourteen, twelve, eight and one, would have to go to school. We agreed that if I got the job that that would be how it would go.

After a week or two I was offered one of the positions; I accepted it. On our first day of work in August of that summer my co-instructor (I really dislike the term my co-instructor as I feel that it puts

whoever is saying it is in a way above the other. Culturally from an *Onkwehón:we* viewpoint it feels inegalitarian) and I met formally. Although I knew who he was through mutual friends we had no personal connection. He is a graduate of the *Ratiwennahní:rats* Program. His dedication to learning, maintaining and growing his language quickly became apparent to me during our first conversation while we sat outside of the building that we worked out of. We planned out our curriculum/lesson plans as far as we could for the year using past instructors lesson plans and curriculum that they had created. For the most part my co-instructor led the planning and teaching of our teaching during our first year, he having far more relevant teaching work and experience with the teaching methodologies then being used in the *Ratiwennahní:rats* Program.

While I felt confident in my language skills, I remember feeling quite intimidated in realizing how much I didn't actually know about teaching in a classroom setting. I give him a lot of credit for really helping to get me moving in understanding morphological and grammatical concepts that I didn't fully understand, had no understanding of, or didn't even know existed at the time. He was always open to my questions about how a morphological pattern worked, his easy-going personality, teaching style and explanations of our classes morphological lessons were easy for me to understand and immediately apply to what I already knew. Our work together was enjoyable and mutually beneficial for each of our language and teaching proficiencies in addition to our students. Our teaching practices continue to expand and contract as information, resources and needs become relevant. It would be fair to say that our morphological and grammar lessons are the backbone of what we teach and that the practical application of the lessons our students learn from them are through a variety of pedagogical approaches. We are given great leeway in how we run our classrooms from our bosses who understand that our concern is not only for the language we are teaching at *Ratiwennahní:rats* but for our language as whole, including all of our sister *Kaien'kehá:ka* communities of *Kanehsatà:ke, Akwesáshne, Kenhtè:ke, Ganièn:ke, Ohswé:ken, Wáhta* and *Kana'tsoharè:ke*.

This year, 2025, marks my ninth year as a language instructor in the *Kanien'kéha' Ratiwennahní:rats* Adult Language Immersion Program. There has since been added a second cohort which began as our first cohort was entering its second year so that there is always a year one and two cohort simultaneously in progress. I have had the good fortune to work with all of the instructors that we've had at *Ratiwennahní:rats* and be a beneficiary of their knowledge, skills and life experiences that they have brought to our combined efforts in helping our people learn *Onkwehonwehnéha'.* It is difficult after nine years to summarize the totality of things I have learned in teaching adult L2 learners. That being said, there is a few relevant points I'd like to touch upon without reaching too deeply into each point.

Skarihwarò:ron/The matters are gathered back

Nahò:ten Wakerihontákwen shikherihonnién:ni/what I've taken away since teaching

The first point I'd like to speak to is responsibility. In the early years of *Kanien'kéha'* immersion schooling in *Kahnawà:ke* the thought was that the children will bring back the language into our homes. This was not only an unrealistic expectation to place on them but an unfair burden to put on them, to save our language. I say this without any prejudice to those who started us off that way. They were only doing the best that they could given the variables of the time. None the less, even this helped to bring exposure to a large portion of our population that may not have had exposure to *Kanien'kéha'* and *Onkwehón:we* culture in their homes. It is our adult population's responsibility to bring our language back into our homes.

I make it a point to impress upon our students that <u>you</u> are responsible for your language learning; the governments that got us in this position are certainly not going to do it for you. You also can't you use the ole, "well, my aunt (insert relative of choice here) is a speaker" as credit because what does that have to do with what you are or are not doing. I mean you don't get to take credit for your cousin's Lacrosse goals, right? I tell them *sewatateronhiá:kent tsi nikarì:wehs enhsateweiénsthake' ne kèn:'en nene tósha' taiotonhwéntsohwe' ne sheien'okòn:'a ken' ní:tsi ahòn:ronke', kwah nek ne enwá:ton' ahshetháhrhahse' nok sha'oié:ra enhòn:ronke'*/*Make your self suffer(work hard) while you're a student here so that your children don't have to learn to speak this way, you'll just be able to talk to them and they will become speakers naturally*. Just the fact that that is what we are doing gives examples of success in revitalizing/reclaiming our language. We have all come in our own ways to realize that our identify as *Onkwehón:we* is tied directly to our language and that it is our individual responsibility to learn it and help to reclaim it. Not only that, but that we have a responsibility from an *Onkwehón:we* mind set to help others to do the same. It is from these individual efforts that we can try to build collective efforts with the willing.

One of the big advantages I feel is my and my co-workers' L2 speaker status: we know what it is like to not be speakers of our language. We've all had to learn to be comfortable with being uncomfortable, and with knowing that we maybe or, are making a mistake when we're speaking. We are aware of the questions, problems and frustrations our learners can, will or may face given their own personal variables. There is times when we can predict them before they can even see them coming. We've already been there so we're able to understand when they're not able to fully articulate a question or have trouble conceptualizing a concept on its own or what the results may be when used in longer discourse with other features. In the end we can only expect them to be responsible for doing what they are able to do.

Given the above it is beneficial for students to have at least some background information about what they are going to experience during their time at *Ratiwennahní:rats* from linguistic, cultural and vernacular viewpoints about the language they will be learning to speak as those are the methods that will be used in teaching it. As well, they need to learn that they will make mistakes, lots and lots of mistakes. They will need to become comfortable with that fact. They also need to understand that fluent speakers make mistakes too. I tell them everyone speaks English but we all make mistakes in that language, does that make us any less fluent as English speakers? No, right? A mistake is not always an indicator of a lack of grammatical or morphological control over a feature in a language. Sometimes it's just a slip of the tongue and we all make them. We tell them that we will never laugh at them to demean their mistakes. We may though sometimes laugh at a mistake as the mispronounced word will be humorous; the difference between "push the button" and "push the vagina" is only the sound of an extra -s-. Being able to laugh and have a good time is one of the greatest relief valves that we can use. Of course, discretion is best until relationships and personalities are mutually understood.

They also need to get acclimatized to the fact that much of what they know about language from an English speakers' viewpoint may not be applicable to *Kanien'kéha'*. For example: how to ask a simple

question and what background information is required to be known about *Kanien'kéha'* to elicit the contextually relevant answer they're seeking is different in *Kanien'kéha'* and English. A simple example of this is when one would ask the seemingly simple "how do you say" question using English verbs in the infinitive, which is very common, i.e.,"how do you say 'to run'"? Well, on the surface, it's cut and dried, right? In *Kanien'kéha'* it isn't, we don't have infinitives, therefore in order for the person answering the question they'd need to know contextually, when is the running taking place? Who is running? How humans are numbered is also different in *Kanien'kéha'* than in English. Are you just saying run in conjunction with tense? If so, it's a particular verb stem. If you're asking about run in the sense of is running, then, it's a different verb stem. Is there direction towards or away involved?

Many of the grammatical rules of speaking can and will seem ambiguous, and, not only ambiguous to learners but foreign. Abrams (2006) speaking of his early attempts at learning *Ononta'kéha'* encapsulates the reasons for this type of backgrounding before getting into the actual lessons: "[t]here are no rules to Onondaga, you just say it and if you know Onondaga it will come out right. Somehow, they failed to see that this was no help to someone who didn't 'know Onondaga'"(p. 4). Understanding that there is rules to it and that knowing that many of these rules are mostly easily patternable helps to ease learner's trepidation when they start to get an idea of the scope of *Kanien'kéha'* morphology, which is huge. It's good practice for students to see an overhead view of what is going to be involved in learning their language. The same holds true for the pronunciation of sounds of our language and the accent with which it is spoken. We see now an emergence of some of our people no-longer speaking with our unique *Kahnawà:ke* accent which helps learners to ease into the sounds and prosody of spoken *Kanien'kéha'.* This gives them pronunciation problems and their prosody sounds English, sometimes making them sound like a foreigner.

I'd not say that we have fully refined all of our backgrounding, pre-course work if you will, but, we have identified a need and are working to address it. It is a work in progress like all other things in our teaching and personal language reclamations.

I'll talk now about the actual teaching of language. The very first thing that our leaners need to know is that as far as we know, we've never been in this position before. That is as far as we know we have never been in a state where the vast majority of our people do not speak our language. Therefore, the teaching of it as a second language with the hope that that will help spur new Mother Tongue speakers in our children is, necessarily a new concept. There are concepts that we know exist yet haven't yet found a way teach them in an as user friendly way as other things and can only teach them piecemeal. A good example of this is particles. While they can have several fixed interpretive meanings in English which one of them it means in a given utterance may be dependent on context, or what was said before or after it, or its place in an utterance. For instance the commonly known particle used as *bye/good bye* in *Kanien'kéha* is *ó:nen (ki'wáhi)* can also mean *now* as in *katonkária'ks ó:nen/I'm hungry now.* Yet, it can also mean *already* as in *ó:nen tewakatskà:nhon/I've already eaten,* it can also mean *when* as in *ó:nen onkwerien'tí:io'/when I became satisfied.* In each of the meanings following the initial commonly known *good bye* the meaning of the particle *ó:nen* only becomes fixed in meaning in conjunction to the tense or aspect of the verb its being used with.

That we have made mistakes and will continue to make mistakes in teaching is the only honest thing we can tell them. When we do become aware of our mistakes we own them. Some of them have been big ones. Once we've realized them we can only say "I made a mistake, we need to start over". Without these acts of humbleness, we risk poisoning the pot. This means that teaching is a work in progress and that teaching methodologies will likely remain in flux.

Whatever methodology is being used (and we have experimented quite a few), there is only two real qualifiers: effectiveness and efficiency. There is methodologies that, while effective, are very time

consuming, which takes time from other equally or at times more important things one needs to teach, or organizational requirements. There is also things that, while efficient, will lack the depth of knowledge that our learners need to take away from any given topic. For instance, our pronominal prefix system has a total of over 300 prepronominal prefixes: there are agent prefixes, patient prefixes, possessive prefixes each covering five separate verb and noun stems. It would be incredibly inefficient to expect students to memorise each possible form for each possible verb or noun combination, the results would be trying to remember several thousands of possible whole words. It is far more efficient to teach them the concept that the verbs and nouns are built from the center outwards and each verb and noun stem takes a specific set of pronominal prefixes based on whether one is the agent, patient with verbs and the possessor of something with nouns.

When trying to balance these two there is a need to teach in a way that creates the following: a minimum take-away (know the concept exists and has to use it to be a speaker), an ideal take-away (can use the concept well enough through conscious re-call) and lastly the learner can fully use the concept, not only on its own but in conjunction with previously learned material. As well as creating the materials that support the aforementioned take-aways with passive recall for their post *Ratiwennahní:rats* life, where, the majority of the students will no longer have the same access to speakers to clear up any ambiguities or questions they may have. Our students are given tests to which they receive a grade; the grade is simply for their own reflection to see what they've understood and what they still need to work on. As these tests can often reflect a whole morphological unit they vary in size and complexity and are made to reflect the above criteria. The same holds true for the black board lessons and study guides we have been making.

All of these things must, of course, be placed into context with time available, resources available and the understanding of your students in the context of not giving too much, too fast, too soon or conversely too little, too slow and too late. For the students it is important to know that all of

these are just tools to prop up their learning how to speak. They won't always understand how a given feature works or why it works that way, what's most important is that the are able to use it in its proper context. For instance, one does not need to understand how and why length multiplied by width squared equals the area of a rectangle, they just need to be able to do it.

Related to the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency is the use of the English language in the classroom. We've found that there is times that explaining a concept in English is both the more effective and efficient means of imparting understanding. This is not to say the material is only explained in English but that the explanations are given in both languages as the complexity of the concept or the students ability to understand it in *Kanien'kéha* dictates. The deciding factor in using English or not for whatever the case may be is not one of maintaining an immersion environment, but what is going to best help the learners to understand and thus grow their language speaking proficiency, thus growing the speech community. Despite our use of English at times we are able to keep our immersion environment above 90% of the time. Teachers need to be on-track in monitoring the unnecessary entrance of the English language into their classrooms. It comes very easily as people just want to communicate with each other, yet the discipline lies in using what the student knows or in asking how to say it.

The last point I wish to speak to in regard to effectiveness and efficiency of teaching and learning *Onkwehonwehnéha'* is the role of modern technology. We are well into the digital information age and its ensuing technological tools such as Smart Boards, quizlet, Kahoot–not to mention iPhones, Lap top computers, Zoom and anything else the internet has been offering. We have no problems in utilizing all the relevant digital technologies we have available. They are certainly efficient and depending on the user can certainly be effective. That's the key, though all of these digital tools (or even good old-fashioned paper and pen) are just tools; they require a user. They will not save our language and culture if no one uses them. Not only that, but, they are external resources that we have no agency

over and, stand to lose as the technology expands rapidly or in event of natural or man-made catastrophe that results in no access to the electricity required to utilize them. Teachers and learners must remember that we come from an oral culture. It must be in our hearts, minds and spirits that no matter what tools we are using from foreign cultures, we are using them with the intent that we will at some time no longer need them.

We need to remember that as infants the power of our brains was such that it figured out exactly which neurons in our brains to fire to activate the exact number of nerves and muscles to any given part of our body with the specific amount of force required for the task we wanted to accomplish. We've all done this as infants before we even had the power of speech, without external input. Our brains, along with all of our other senses, are organic innate pattern recognition machines. It is indeed possible for us to regain the vast orality that our speakers had and still have.

An important note for those involved in Indigenous Language Revitalization/Reclamation is that from each cohort I've co-taught in there has been few compared to their cohort size who have continued to grow their language proficiency in line with what they leave our program with. Others try to maintain it, though over time their language stagnates and begins to decay. I'll speak to this in the next section.

My time in *Ratiwennahní:rats* with my co-workers and students has grown, and, continues to grow my cultural and linguistic awareness of by several orders of magnitude despite knowing there's things in our language that I only know exist and don't know much more about them than that. I'll end the narrative portion of my self-reflection here as the scope of this project will be best concluded by speaking to what I've written about what and where my life and teaching experiences have brought me to, and, my opinions on the current state of teaching our language and its vitality.

Tsi niiohtonhátie ne Onkwawén:na ken wenhniseraténion/current language situation

I'll begin this section by attempting to look at the vitality of our language as the term is commonly understood. Those of us who are involved in it here in *Kahnawà:ke* can see very clearly the writing on the wall in regard to our Mother Tongue speakers. They are for the most part starting or nearing the end of their earthly existence. We see the results of the same already having happened in our sister *Kanien'kehá:ka* community of *Kenhtà:ke* having already past the time they had with their last generation of Mother Tongue speakers (Green, 2009, p. 3). Green (2020) as well notes that in 2020 there was only one remaining speaker of *Kanien'kéha* on the Six Nations reserve who, if I'm not misinformed, may have since passed. Yet how do we even begin to talk about such a thing such as the vitality of a language such as *Kanien'kéha*'?

DeCaire (2023), in his PhD Thesis, *The Role Of Adult Immersion In Kanien'keha Revitalization,* offers what I feel to-date are the most helpful conclusions regarding the difficulties of accurately determining the vitality of *Kanien'kéha.*

> These conclusions seem the most relevant at this point in regard to vitality, what and whose metric do we use and what's included in the metric [...] it is challenging to determine which metric is best suited for measuring Kanien'kéha vitality and endangerment. This is because, as discussed previously, each metric has its own set of shortcomings and, as a result, a completely accurate and rigorously-detailed description is not possible. Even used in conjunction, the GIDS, UNESCO, and EGIDS lack accuracy namely because they were designed to measure a language's degree of endangerment, attrition, loss or disruption (from healthy to unhealthy), rather than revitalization (from unhealthy to healthy), and therefore lack an ability to measure languages in nuanced situations. This means that these metrics lack consideration for languages that have experienced language use decline or disruption but have since been on a path of revitalization. As a result, certain areas of measure are almost completely absent, such as the role and number of L2

> speakers, including their levels of proficiency and their likelihood of using the language within their peer groups, as well as the role of small pockets of a community working to create primary language use domains and peer group usage within a larger community that does not speak the language. (p. 42)

DeCaire concludes that:

> [t]o best evaluate Kanien'kéha vitality, I have integrated the aforementioned metrics, incorporating the evaluative factors and questions that they use to determine a languages degree of endangerment […] while being mindful that Kanien'kehá:ka have been working to reverse the shift of Kanien'kéha since the late 1970s. I furthermore keep in mind that the Kanien'kéha situation is complex and diverse, and thus no single factor can be used alone to give an accurate assessment. For example, although one criterion may rank high, another criterion may rank quite low and need urgent attention. Also, a certain criterion may have more value in contributing to vitality over others, such as intergenerational transmission, argued by Fishman (1991) as being the most important criterion in a language's survival. (p. 42)

He provides a table showing his metric (reproduced below; pp. 44-45).

Table 7

Evaluating Kanien'kéha vitality in Kanien'kehá:ka territories 2021

Language Vitality Evaluative Factors			Ahkwesáhsne	Kahnawà:ke	Kanehsatà:ke	Ohswé:ken	Tyendinaga	Wáhta	Total
Vitality Metric Rating	GIDS		8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	UNESCO		Severely Endangered	Severely Endangered	Severely Endangered	Critically Endangered	Critically Endangered	Critically Endangered	Severely Endangered
	EGIDS		8a Moribund	8a Moribund	8a Moribund	8b Nearly Extinct	8b Nearly Extinct	8b Nearly Extinct	8a Moribund
Speakers on Territory[1]	L1 Speakers (advanced proficiency or higher)		350	150	60	0	0	2	562
	L2 Speakers (advanced proficiency or higher)		10	40	5	15	6	1	77
Proportion of Speakers	On territory		12,896 (2.8%)	7,950 (2.4%)	1,371 (4.7%)	5,535 (0.3%)	2,176 (0.3%)	157 (1.9%)	30,058 (2.1%)
	All membership		18,725 (1.9%)	10,905 (1.7%)	2,503 (2.6%)	11,259 (0.1%)	9,599 (0.06%)	796 (0.4%)	53,787 (1.2%)
Intergenerational Transmission	L1 Speaking Families		9	4	1	0	0	0	14
	L1 Children of L2 Parents		5	11	3	5	2	0	26
Domain Usage and Functions	Identity function beyond emblematic and symbolic function		Yes	Yes	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited
	Community function beyond emblematic and symbolic function		Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	No[2]	No[2]	Limited
	Used to transmit essential bodies of knowledge		Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Limited
Government Attitudes & Policy	Federal	Protection by law	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
		Committed long-term funding	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Band /Tribe	Committed long-term funding	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
		Language Law/Policy	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Some
		Official band/tribal council resolution to support language revitalization efforts	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Some
Community Attitudes	Most support language maintenance		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Most actively promote language use		Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
	Most actively oppose use of dominant language (English and/or French)		No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Literacy and Education Materials	Established orthography		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Orthographic standardization		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Written form supported by community		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Modernization (literature, materials, lexicon development)		Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited
	Adequate dictionaries, lexicons, and learning grammars		Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	No	Limited
	Adequate documentation		Limited	Limited	No	No	No	No	Limited
	Adequate body of literature		Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	No	Limited
	Available media (videos, recordings, etc.)		Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited
Maintenance & Revitalization Infrastructure	Established language revitalization body		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Most communities
	Ongoing revitalization planning process in place		Yes	Yes	No	Infant stage	Yes	Infant stage	Some communities
	Immersion program for toddlers and/or children[3]		Yes (N-6)	Yes (N-6)	Yes (K-6)	Yes (K-6)	Yes (N-4)	No	Yes
	Immersion program for adults		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Non-immersion classes for children		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited	Yes
	Non-immersion classes for adults		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited	Yes
	Program support for families		Limited	Limited	No	No	No	No	No
	Adequate visibility and community mobilization efforts		Fair	Fair	No	No	No	No	Limited

Figure 1

Two relevant points come to mind from my lived experiences in regard to DeCaire's look at language vitality: "despite many well-intentioned efforts and significant gains since the 1970s in language revitalization, the reality is that Kanien'kéha' is overall still experiencing a greater rate of speaker loss than new speaker creation" (DeCaire, 2023, p. 70). It should be obvious that the math of the situation doesn't look good for us. When we add to that, the simple math that during the time period that intergenerational transmission ended 'en mass' we had for the most part an entire generation of speakers whose numbers did not for the most part keep our language in a healthy state of vitality. Numbers of speakers do not necessarily equate to the health and vitality of our language. The dichotomy of this lies in that the more speakers we had the more diversity of lexicon, speaking styles, family or area dialects we had and, fuller understandings of all of these things related to the use of our language.

Today with much work being done in revitalizing/reclaiming our language people see and hear our L2 learners and think "well, they're speaking Mohawk, something must be going right" or "we have a lot of speakers now" without ever understanding whether or not what that person who they think of as a speaker either considers themself a speaker or is considered a speaker by people who actually are speakers. I can completely understand that point of view; I was there at one time. In my ignorance I heard children speaking and to me it sounded like they were fluent speakers. I was clueless. This information should be widely known. To my knowledge people who are not actively involved in language revitalization or reclamation are quite oblivious to the fact that we're about to reach the end of our Mother Tongue Speaker's time with us and have little to no understanding of how that is going to affect us, them, their children and the coming generations. Like all problems that need to be solved, people have to know that the problem does in fact exist in order to decide to do something about it. The simple fact the majority of our Mother Tongue Speakers are towards of the end of their life cycle and

that we are not producing more L2 speakers than we are losing should shake people up. It may even motivate them to become involved in our efforts.

The other point is, what constitutes an L2 speaker of *Kanien'kéha'*? What is the metric we use to measure it? Is there a relevant metric to measure it and whose epistemology does it use? In my experience there is not a simple cut and dried answer to this. To date at KORLCC we have been using the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview as a model, it certainly has been helpful to give us a starting point to measure how language is acquired and used in stages. The ACTFL Oral Proficiency was created to measure oral English language proficiency.

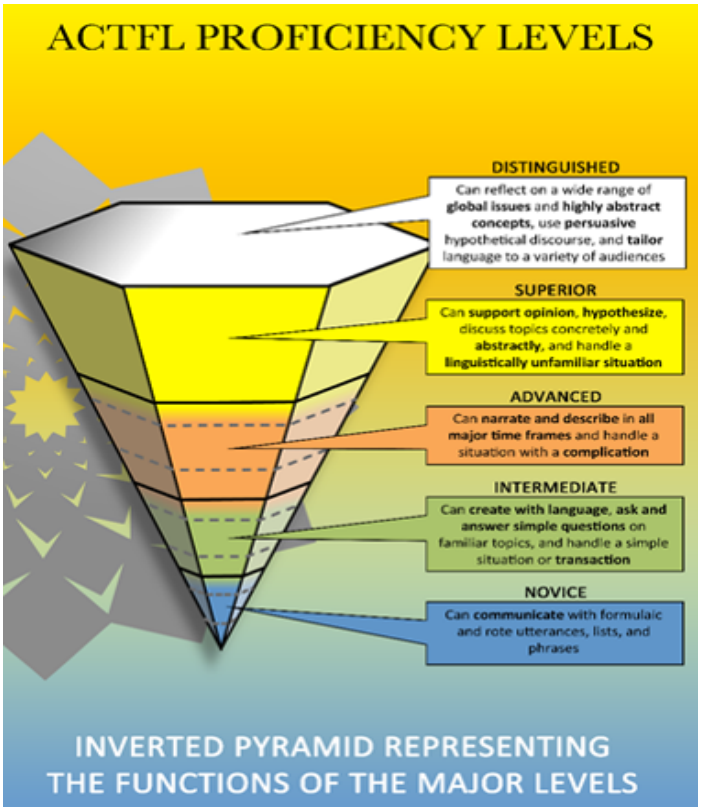

Figure 2

The differences between *Kanien'kéha'* and English are vast, and the higher up on the ACTFL proficiency cone shown above, one rises, the more difficult it becomes to reconcile the differences between the two languages and the ACTFL criteria. Knowing this was one of my motivations for my

initial MILR project. Using ACTFL isn't all bad though; it at least gives us as teachers, and our students, a way to measure progress to meet our programs current sole criteria for graduation: advancement of our students in at least three of the ACTFL sub-levels. We had, until a few years ago, used the aforementioned ACTFL criteria and maintaining a 60% grade average totaled from the morphology and grammar tests that we give. We found that the pass or fail based on graded marks did not accurately reflect our students' oral proficiency. Some students who do well on tests would have less of an ability to use the high marks they'd get on tests when speaking than someone who received a lower or even a poor mark. The ACTFL criteria remains our sole criteria for graduating from the *Ratiwennahní:rats* program.

I've asked various speakers over time when they'd apply the term *Ionhrónkha'/she or one is a fluent speaker* to someone. The answer has been usually something like this: "*nó:nen eniekwé:ni' aieká:raton'/when she or one is able to tell a story*". As Mother Tongue Speakers they recognize fluency quickly. Yet, in asking them to articulate what's included or excluded from their criteria in defining any of the various words they use amongst themselves in describing oral proficiency of other speakers has been something they've never consciously mapped out. I'm at the point in my own language where there's times that I definitely can't say that this person or that person is not a speaker, yet, I recognise that if someone were to speak to me in English with the same amount of oral proficiency I would be hesitant to say that they're fluent as far as the word is used to define a speaker colloquially. I would definitely say they can speak, though their ability is limited. So, where does this leave me?

In terms of having an oral proficiency metric for *Kanien'kéha'*, as I've previously stated, I feel that the definitions of oral proficiency must come from our Mother Tongue Speakers, but would it only include what we'd say is the linguistic view of what that contains linguistically separated from the cultural teachings I outlined earlier? Well, I'd say even that would be a good start and leave us in a better position than we are in now. There is certainly Pre-Columbian and pre-colonialized cultural

concepts that remain imbedded in our language that work in shaping how our speakers use language, those of us who know them recognise them. It is important to me that you understand that although I look at this work that some of us are doing as language reclamation as opposed to revitalization I'm at present in no way opposed to those of our people who are only interested in revitalization in the sense of making *Kanien'kéha'* our main language again and creating new generations of Mother Tongue Speakers from their L2 learning. They too can have plenty to offer that will be useful for us reclaimation-ists. In our way we are to remain open to them wanting to come home.

Green (2009), using *Kanien'kéha'* as a model, gives a nice synopsis of what language reclamation should mean to *Rotinonhsión:ni* people:

> The revitalization of Kanyen'keha as a living language is key to understanding the values, history and philosophy that provide the foundation for our political, economic, social and spiritual institutions. Finally, understanding and using these institutions is the key to renewing our autonomy and independence. (p. 2)

All Green's points lead us back to one simple word: *Onkwehonwehnéha'*.

We have a long road ahead to reclaim our identity as *Onkwehón:we* all the while remaining a people under physical, social and spiritual occupation by the modern nation states of Canada and the United States of America. Our *Rotinonhsión:ni* people have been active in helping to create strategies and approaches in dealing with language and cultural loss, both within the mainstream academic world and in their home communities. Stacey's (2016) MILR project on challenges and needs of continuing to learn for *Ratiwennahní:rats* graduates points to a kincentric continuation of learning,

> learning must be rooted in a kincentric paradigm where we honor and strive for *Kanien'keha'* speaking relationships with all our relations, including those of the natural world and spiritual world. I believe this concept can be applied to our approach in Indigenous language revitalization, by taking a kincentric approach to language planning we would inevitably address

> our concerns about language use in the home, cultivating a network of speakers, working closer with our elders and keeping our spiritual connection to the natural world. (p. 95)

This is a natural *Onkwehonwehnéha'* approach that should be supported and nurtured.

Another MILR graduate project by Hemlock (2020) created a handbook to help to rebuild our cultural mentoring process' in the selection of leadership; "the Haudenosaunee Mentor-Apprentice Language and Leadership Development Program (HMALLDP) is focused on raising the proficiency of adult second language learners, while also providing them with leadership skills. The handbook developed through this research was meant to act as a first step in the development of a Mentor-Apprentice Leadership Development Program"(Hemlock, p. iii).

Green created what he calls "The Oral Literacy Approach," in his 2020 PHD dissertation to help the teaching of *Kanien'kéha'.*

> Encouragingly, through research, experimentation, practice, application and reflection we are coming to understand what teaching methods and approaches best fit to teach and learn Mohawk based on a 'right-method-for-the-right-time-for-the-right-learner-for-the-right-level of speaking proficiency' approach. This dissertation presents these second language teaching methods and approaches in a manual format designed for ease of use by Mohawk language teachers. The second language teaching methods and approaches are organized through the Oral Literacy Approach. (p. i)

DeCaire (2023) looking to adult *Kanien'kéha'* immersion specifically says: "this dissertation also provides a scope and sequenced curriculum organized into structurally-based units for the second-year of Kanien'kéha immersion programming, a period in program delivery that moves L2 speakers from intermediate to advanced speaking proficiency, in the context of the currently extant Kanien'keha' adult immersion programs" (p.2). He also speaks to said programs' importance and their needs logistically, financially and for sustainability.

There are more *Rotinonhsión:ni* examples; as well there are many relevant examples from other *Onkwehón:we* nations that are contributing to the Indigenous Language Revitalization/Reclamation field in tangible ways. Language revitalization on its own is a huge undertaking. A language reclamation is a vastly larger and more inclusive concept then the former. There is so much to do that requires so many people to do it but, I'll end here with this thought. Who is willing to make the required personal sacrifices necessary for the reclamation of our culture? Are you?

Tsiá:ken/be courageous,

Eh nenwakewennakéhake'/such will be the amount of my words

Ta ne tho/it is done

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