Breathing Life into Lunaapeew Language Through Echoes of the Past Using Archival Recordings

by

Medweanakwedokwe (Velma Noah-Nicholas)

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

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Abstract

This project focuses on contributing to preserving and revitalizing the Lunáapeew language by using archival audio materials. It centres the recorded voices of Lunáapeew elders from the Eelunáapeewi Láhkeewiit Nation in Southwestern Ontario, Canada—voices that serve as an irreplaceable record of ancestral sound. With only one remaining first-language speaker, the authentic sound of the language is at risk of being lost.

This project seeks to maintain, honour, and make the original sound of Lunáapeew accessible to community members

The project includes creating an activity booklet that pairs archived audio recordings with QR codes, allowing learners to connect visuals, writing, and sound. This resource supports incremental language learning—one word, one sound, one memory at a time—and helps safeguard the linguistic heritage of the Lunaapeew People.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family, especially my mother, a residential school survivor who was denied the opportunity to hear her parents speak their language at home.

I am grateful for the chance to teach my children and grandchildren everything that I have learned and continue to learn along the way.

I thank my husband for his unwavering support—for allowing me to follow my dreams and sharing the long weeks away from home that this journey required. My dreams became his dream.

Also, this work is dedicated to the seven generations yet to come, in the hope that they will find this valuable and inspiring.

Anúshiik Weemu Aweeniik, Ktahwalulohmwa

(Thank you, everyone. I love you all.)

Acknowledgements

Many years ago, I began this journey as a college student completing an assignment that sparked a deep desire to learn how to speak Lunáapeew. As a young mother, I wanted to speak to my babies, but at the time, I did not know enough of the language to do so, so I sought the guidance of Elders. In searching for answers, I was also searching for connection—for a feeling of wholeness. When that empty space in my heart finally began to fill, the experience was profound. I am forever grateful to the Elders who shared their knowledge with me. Our bond, rooted in our love for our language, became one of the most meaningful parts of this journey.

Anúshiik to the teachers and mentors along the way who have already returned home: Alma Burgoon, Rita Huff, Mattie Huff, Marjorie Logan, Beulah Timothy, and Glen Jacobs. And to my grandfather, Vernon Stonefish, who spoke to me in Lunáapeew when I was four—I still remember the sound of his voice and the feeling of being wrapped in love.

Anúshiik to those who continue to walk in this world: Dianne Snake and Ruby Jacobs.

Anúshiik, ktahwulohmwa - (Thank-you, I love you all)

Introduction

The intention of this project emerges from a place of urgency and love. As our community approaches the day when we may lose our last remaining first-language speaker, we also approach the loss of the most beautiful sound of Lunáapeew. The Elders who have gone before us left behind a legacy of audio recordings—voices that once guided the development of our one and only dictionary. However, while the written words remain accessible, the sounds that give them life are often hidden away on dusty shelves or in museums requiring special permission to access.

The research questions that guide my Masters in Indigenous Language Revitalization [MILR] project is: How can we use archival audio recordings to help learners of Lunáapeew to pronounce effectively? Does incorporating archives with technology contribute to much-needed revitalization efforts? Can listening to archival material foster a reconnection with ancestral voices within the Eelunaapeew Lahkeewiit Nation, supporting identity and traditional knowledges? The first question is answered through the production of the resource's booklet, which can be used by all members of Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit. Not only are they learning through listening and understanding, but they are also able to hear the very old language of a relative. It will be the community that decides if the second and third questions can be answered or rather felt within themselves.

This research project is about creating a resource that supports the proper pronunciation of the language from Elders who were fluent speakers of Lunaapeew. This resource is the production of a resource booklet based on a recording of a Lunaapeew Elder, Enoch Jacobs (b. 1895). This is an original recording from the 1980's for use in the production of our dictionary

by linguist John O'Meara. This booklet contains a QR code that directly connects to the recording of Enoch Jacobs. In the recording, he is asked several words. In my project, these are constructed into an audio-visual learning resource with activities to follow that will reinforce learning.

As a second-language learner from fluent Elders, I had the opportunity to hear them: speak to each other, laugh with each other, unknowingly inspiring one another to pick up their language again and use it to its fullest potential for many years. They would often tell me stories about times when they were not allowed to speak. My great aunt described to me once that her mother (my grandmother), at the age of 6, picked her up and sat her on the kitchen counter and said, "kway kiishkwihk, ayaskii shihshwanakwiil! (today you must talk like a white man!)." This story brought tears to my eyes, as it did for my aunt as she told it with a huge lump in her throat. My grandmother told her own child who she must become, and she had no choice but to do so. From that day on, she was forced to speak English at school. Learning and listening to the Elders, I have heard the hard truths of assimilation and oppression, they encouraged me to keep learning the language. This long journey has guided me to where I am today and where I will continue to go.

Most of my mentors, teachers, and Elders are gone, leaving us the inability to hear spoken language in everyday life. This is where retrieving, accessing, and obtaining recordings can be seen as a crucial part of language revitalization within our community. Today, over 100 recordings sit in a museum in Ottawa; these were used to create our only dictionary in the 1980's. It has been an unpleasant journey trying to get access to these recordings. For over 15 years, I have been requesting copies of all the recordings, along with sending many emails, speaking with different people, only to be denied access due to copyright. Recently, within the

last six months, however, I have been sent 27 recordings digitally and all I need is to enter my email and I have access for 30 days. So, there has been some movement on this, but not much. Institutions like this need to be changing their outlook on supporting Indigenous communities in their journey to repatriation. Over the years, I have been able to get at least 30-40 tapes of speakers from fellow community learners, Elders and organizations. I have been invited to the Mohawk Institute, where I was encouraged to copy the resources that were there. This is where, for the first time, I heard my grandmother speak the language. This was a very emotional experience, where I found myself sitting in a room alone, listening and copying, crying, and so grateful to be there. It proves that language has spirit. As Whiskeyjack and Napier (2020) say:

> nêhiyawêwin and other Indigenous languages are spiritual – and we connect to that spirit through the language, ceremony and the land. [...] The Languages are of this land, and the land holds spirit; therefore, the land is the spirit of the language (sâkâstênohk; Sources of disconnect).

I was guided to where I needed to be that day. I believe our community members have the right to access any or all recordings made within our community. They have a right to hear the recordings of their ancestors and their family members. The Lunaapeew language is no longer a secret; we no longer have to be ashamed or hide it.

Most of these recordings lie silent, their inaccessibility is an act of dishonouring the Elders who gifted their voices to future generations. Yet within them lies an opportunity to restore the wulíihtahkwak—the beautiful sound—that once flowed throughout our Nation. Most of these recordings are of an extractive nature, meaning that they involved direct elicitation such that the linguist, John O'Meara, asked for a word and the speaker provided it. Although there are very few small storytelling episodes, I believe all of the content is valuable to hear.

An example of one small storytelling episode is, when an elderly speaker, Roberta Miskokomon, a member of the Munsee Delaware Nation upstream from where my community is situated, was being questioned on the subject of birds. She answered quite proficiently, but became stumped at the word for a Killdeer, which can be described as a small bird with long legs, that scurries across the land while making a high-pitched sound, seen in the springtime, when the weather is good and new life is beginning to grow. The Elder said, “I cannot remember what it's called, but I know what it says.” She continued, describing the killdeer as yelling “ehkiiheet,” which means “to plant.” This bird, which we later found out is called Meemooniikeesh, teaches us when it is planting time within our community, supporting our sustenance.

As we know, the animals are our teachers, as is the land. This recording proves that this is true, and that it has the potential to teach our community members about their relationships within creation, teaching that our language comes from the land and demonstrating how “Ayîsiniwak hold relational kinship with the water, the land, and all our living relatives, including the Four-Legged Nation, Water Nation, Sky Nation, and Plant Nation” (Whiskeyjack & Napier, 2020, Land Back and Language Back section). Ultimately, if our people do not have access to these recordings, they miss out on valuable information such as this.

After hearing this recording, my initial plan was to create storybooks from this example, but only later I found out that most recordings are done in an extractive nature, leaving only one word documented at a time. The linguist (John O’Meara) had a list to complete, and this is what most if not all of what the recordings are like. This is why I also chose not to edit the recordings that the QR codes link to, but to leave in the conversations or storytelling that the speaker

wished to share – “Technology will never replace people or speakers, but it helps to amplify their voices across time and distance” (Galla, 2016, p. 1149).

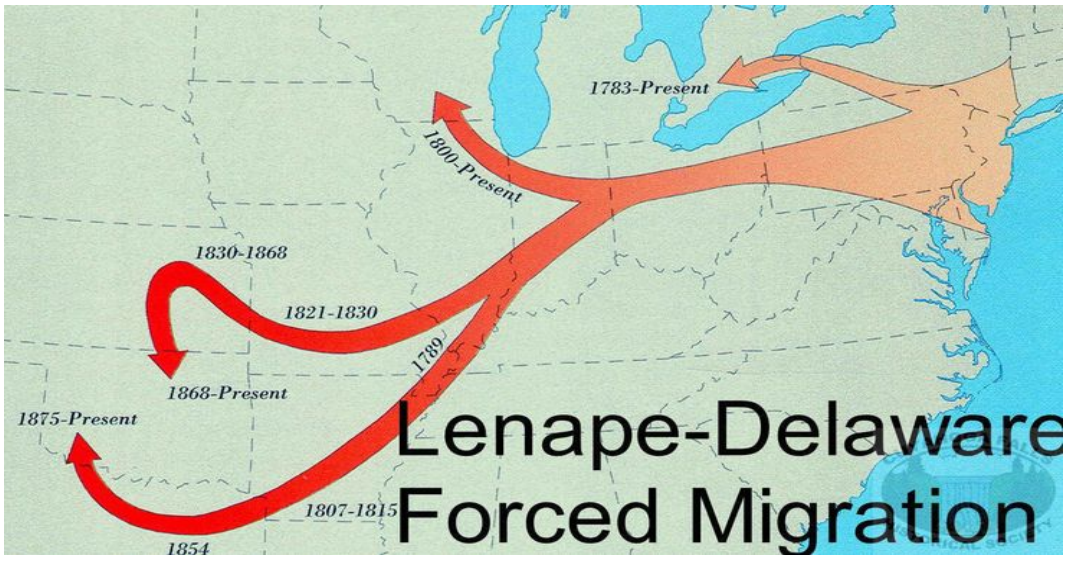
I, therefore, decided instead of creating storybooks, that through this project, I will aim to begin reviving these archival recordings by developing an activity booklet that uses QR codes to link images and text to their original audio. This is using newer technology paired with archives that still prove to be beneficial. This resource will be made available to Eelŭnaapeewi Lahkéewiit community members for educational, recreational, and intergenerational language learning purposes. This project is about supporting the community in their own journey to access the recordings, and allow them to hear the sounds that speakers make, knowing that we all have the same language within ourselves. English has become our dominant, acceptable language for communication, it is too convenient for us to the point where we resort to English when speaking, reading, and writing, making it difficult for new learners of the language to pronounce or even try to repeat new words in Lunaapeew.

Positionality Statement

Nii ndushiinzi Medweanakwedokwe. My real name is Medweanakwedowe, meaning "voice or sound of the clouds," though most people know me as Velma Noah-Nicholas. Nii ha Lunaapeexkwe—I am a Lunaapeew woman. Noonjiiyayii Lunaapeew ahkiing—I am from Lunaapeew lands.

My ancestral homelands are in present-day New Jersey and New York along the East Coast, where my ancestors lived before being forcibly moved west to what is now Eelŭnaapeewi Lahkéewiit. Names like Moraviantown or Delaware Nation do not reflect who we truly are. Lunaapeew means "original people," or more deeply, "people of the heart."

Figure 1: Migration Map[1]



[1] The Lenape Native Americans. Retrieved from https://8bishumanities.weebly.com/lenape.html

Ndumiimunzi Puleew—I am a member of the Turkey Clan. I have lived in my community since birth. I am the daughter of a residential school survivor and grew up without hearing my language, despite having fluent grandparents. I cherish the memory of my grandfather speaking Lunáapeew to me when I was around four—an early spark that has guided my future.

As a young mother, I longed to speak my language to my children, but I knew only a handful of words. Often, feeling defeated and knowing I had not been taught to confidently speak my language, I remembered only very basic words like pooshiish (cat), Mwaakaneew (dog), kooshkoosh (pig), and wiimbat (ten). This grief started to push me into action while I was in a college program that had set me on my path to learning and reclaiming Lunaapeew.

I spent nine years in our community language department learning from Elders through a master-apprentice model, and then seven more years as a personal endeavour. I continued to work exclusively with a few remaining Elders while attending university to become a certified teacher, which then allowed me to teach in the public school system.

We do not have a school on the reserve. When students reach the age of 6, they are transported to a small town 15 minutes away to attend school from grades 1 through 12. I thought if I had the credentials to teach in this system, then I was willing to do what I had to do to make sure the children heard their language.

At that time, I was already teaching the language on the reserve within our daycare centre and kindergarten, well before I received a teaching licence. Today, I have 18 years of teaching experience. I have taught a range of subjects from preschool through college. I've taught courses within the various places and spaces of education. I have experience teaching from the provincial school system to private schools, and on-reserve schools. Today, I work in the community,

supporting and teaching, developing resources and curriculum, pretty much doing anything I can to support the revitalization of my language. Always hoping and having faith that future generations will continue this work into the future.

Language Positionality

Lunaapeew language historically had three dialects: Minsi, Unami and Unalachtigo. Minsi, later referred to as the Munsee dialect, is spoken in Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit and Munsee Delaware Nation; these two communities are approximately 43 km from each other, sharing the same dialect. There are also Lunaapeew located in Six Nations of the Grand River, with unfortunately no speakers remaining. Other communities in the United States known as Delawares of Anakdarko, Delaware of Bartlesville Oklahoma speak the Unami dialect. Stockbridge Munsee Community (Bowler, Wisconsin) speaks Mohican and Munsee, and have learned the Munsee dialect from Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit over the years. There are many similarities between Unami and Munsee dialect yet there are significant differences as well.

Figure 2: Examples of 3 dialects recorded in 1960 by Ives Goddard (Goddard, 2010, p. 8)

Gloss	Unami (Oklahoma)	Munsee	Today's Spelling
1) Horse	*Nehenacnke s*	*Nehnayonkes*	*Nehnayoongus*
2) Hummingbird	*Le-lempeli ś*	*Li lih cha s*	*Liiliichaash*
3) Duck	*Kwi-kwinkem*	*Wsihwe-w*	*Wshihweew*
4) My shoes	*Nemac-ipahk*	*Nemahksenal*	*Numahksunal*
5) onion	*o-le-pan*	*wi-no-nsay*	*wiinoonzhuy*

Research Bundle

This section explores the relationship of working with archival audio recordings, incorporating technology and the importance of pronunciation in language learning. For centuries, Indigenous languages have endured suppression through genocide, colonialism, government policies, and residential schools-systems disrupted the transmission of language, identity, and culture.

Across Turtle Island (North America), Indigenous communities continue to advocate for, reclaim, and revitalize their languages. These policies have left many, including the Lunaapeew community, without a strong speaking foundation. Today, with only one remaining first-language speaker in Eelunáapeewi Lahkéewiit, revitalization efforts carry profound urgency. Not all learners are able to spend the time necessary to learn from this Elder as aging and deteriorating health have become factors.

The importance of hearing our language from other sources carries great benefit to new learners of Lunaapeew. Most L2 learners have been trained on the Roman orthography system: we have a double vowel system which has unique sounds and we also have a guttural sound as well. Below is a chart depicting the short and long vowel sounds, along the side are the consonants that are part of huluniixsuwaakan (Lunaapeew language).

Figure 3: Lunaapeew Sound Chart

	Short vowels					Long Vowels			
	i	o	a	e	u	ii	oo	aa	ee
B	Bi	bo	ba	be	bu	Bii	boo	baa	bee
D	Di	do	da	de	du	Dii	doo	daa	dee
G	Gi	go	ga	ge	gu	Gii	goo	gaa	gee
h	Hi	ho	ha	he	hu	Hii	hoo	haa	hee
j	Ji	jo	ja	je	ju	Jii	joo	jaa	jee
K	ki	ko	ka	ke	ku	kii	koo	kaa	kee
L	li	lo	la	le	lu	lii	loo	laa	lee
M	mi	mo	ma	me	mu	mii	moo	maa	mee
N	ni	no	na	ne	nu	nii	noo	naa	nee
p	pi	po	pa	pe	pu	pii	poo	paa	pee
S	si	so	sa	se	su	sii	soo	saa	see
T	ti	to	ta	te	tu	tii	too	taa	tee
W	wi	wo	wa	we	wu	wii	woo	waa	wee
X	xi	xo	xa	xe	xu	xii	xoo	xaa	xee
Y	yi	yo	ya	ye	yu	yii	yoo	yaa	yee
Z	zi	zo	za	ze	zu	zii	zoo	zaa	zee
Ch	chi	cho	cha	che	chu	chii	choo	chaa	chee
Sh	shi	sho	sha	she	shu	shii	shoo	shaa	shee
zh	zhi	zho	zha	zhe	zhu	zhii	zhoo	zhaa	zhee
	*guttural sound is pronounced with a catch in the throat								

Reading alone does not convey pronunciation; instead, the language must be heard. Fish and Miyashita (2017, p. 203) note that, in learning Blackfoot, “without being formally trained most learners (and even teachers) are unaware that there is a prosodic system at work that could help them recognize word melody when hearing and producing the language” (p. 203). Similarly, Lunaapeew uses pitch marks that, while represented orthographically, cannot fully capture the sound or rhythm of the language (Fish & Miyashita, 2017, p. 204). This underscores why access to audio is indispensable for accurate pronunciation.

A comparable case is found in Jiikminggan, Australia, a small community with about 350 people with one fluent speaker. Through their efforts they began to identify and develop a data bank of Mangarray everyday phrases that they identified and referred to as “chunks.” These ‘chunks’ were sourced from archival audio recordings. Later referred to as “chunkbank,” this became a repository of useful audio that could be used and accessed by their community, which inspired members to design their own digital resources. “The voices on the original recordings from which the chunks are derived are those of respected community members, many of whom have now passed away, imbuing them with authority. This is likely to increase motivation to engage with them” (Richards & Lardy, 2019, p.4).

Similarly, Moravian missionaries and linguists believed it was vital to document and record the last remaining speakers, as the threat of language loss was very real and remains a concern still today. David Ziesberger (1721-1808) was the leader of a group of Moravian missionaries, living amongst the Lunaapeew, becoming a trusted ally, involving himself with religious, political and social affairs amongst the people. Ziesberger kept diaries and documented some of the earliest grammar of Lunaapeew (Wellenreuther & Wessel, 2005).

The archival recordings from my community Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit, were recorded some 45–85 years ago and are some of the earliest documentations of the Lunaapeew language. As Richards and Lardy (2019, p. 2) observe: “Audio documents repatriated to a community have an inherent power by virtue of the ancestral voices contained on the recordings, even when the content can no longer be understood.” For successful language learning, however, these recordings must be organized and made accessible in ways to support comprehension.

Echoes of our Ancestors

Hearing ancestral voices can be deeply emotional, as I have expressed previously. I cried the first time I heard my grandmother speaking Lunáapeew, something she never did with me in life. But remembering our weekly Sunday visits, when she too had a recording playing in her living room. As an adult, I have interpreted this as her missing out on hearing the language, and that this was her go-to way to fill her spirit with language.

Another example comes from the Nsyilxcn (Okanagan Salish), incorporating a project called the "Talking Dictionary." There are less than 12 first language speakers remaining in their community. The Talking Dictionary project was developed with language recordings and resulted in the development of an online dictionary. Their recordings were made between 1978-1980 and were digitized recently.

This collection consists of 6,831 individual sound files by their Elder Twi-Joseph Albert Michel. The project is quite important to this community as they have never had a published dictionary in the Upper Nicola Dialect. "This project also builds capacity within the community for language maintenance and provides for future collaborations between Indigenous communities and academic institutions." (Lyon et al., 2023, p.3). The project was community-led, and the ownership of this resource is owned by the community. "Speech technologies, including talking dictionaries, hold great potential in supporting communities of Indigenous language learners" (Lyon et al., 2023, p.4).

Reconnection to Elder voices is echoed in the experiences of others, such as Kathleen Michel: "It was hard when I first started, I was overcome with memories of my Uncle's voice after probably thirty-something years after he passed, and then I just close my eyes and see him sitting at the kitchen table. It was really tough being in a leadership position after sister [Sharon

Lindley] passed. But it is really healing listening to him talk; the more I listen, the more I come to accept that this is where I'm meant to be" (as quoted in Lyon et al., 2023, p. 15). These powerful experiences can ignite a deep desire to learn and sustain our language. These experiences are also powerful reminders of how ancestral voices can inspire a profound desire to learn the Lunaapeew language. Kathleen Michel reflected, "[t]o see it to the end project, and to think how much it will help our people-to see how easy [language] is, if you can just listen to it and how we can connect through language with family and friends" (Lyon et al., 2023, p. 15). Reviving ancestral voices is therefore not only linguistic but profoundly healing.

Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit has one printed dictionary, also from 1980 recordings. Our community has access to the dictionary but not to the actual recordings used to construct it. We also do not have a talking dictionary in the Munsee dialect. There is a talking dictionary in the Unami dialect of Lunaapeew, which is in the United States[2]. A talking dictionary type of project may have the same potential for development within our community, depending on access to all the recorded files.

The Use of Technology

One way to manage and use recordings is using technology. Although, "technology may not be the answer to save or revive endangered and Indigenous languages, it can be used to facilitate the language learning process" (Galla, 2016, p. 1145). Galla identifies multiple factors that influence language learning - linguistic, cultural, social, technological, environmental - and how technology can interact with them. Indeed, "Indigenous peoples, since contact, have had to adapt to their changing environment, using new tools to adjust to changing tides" (Galla, 2016, p.

[2] The Lenape Talking Dictionary. https://www.talk-lenape.org/

1143). In this section, I describe a few cases related to the use of technology for language learning.

Brinklow, Littel, Lothian, Pine and Souter (2020), wrote an article titled," Indigenous Language Technologies & Language Reclamation in Canada," in which they argue that the benefits of technology come from those communities that possess a deep understanding of their own histories, traditions and the events that have shaped their identities. They have clear community goals and are focused on the journey rather than the end product, "while a primary goal of language revitalization projects is to encourage the use and learning of the language in question, it is rarely the only goal" (Brinklow et al., 2020, p. 2).

Dr. Lorna Williams insists that "the goals of language revitalization transcend linguistic competence; they are connected to identity and community building, cultural resurgence, and broader social goals of self-determination" (quoted in Brinklow et al., 2020, p.2). In this paper, technology is defined "as a force multiplier: a tool, idea, object or technique that allows people to accomplish their goals more quickly or by using fewer resources" (Brinklow et al., 2020, p.2). Reframing the definition to tool-oriented rather than something goal-oriented allows for more deliberate reasoning to use or not to use technology.

In today's world technology is everywhere and almost all of society uses it to some degree in their daily lives. The younger generation seems to be fully involved in technology without even really feeling savvy but seeing it as a part of today's world.

The creation of more content for an online dictionary, wordlist or phrasebook provides a focus for these young learners to build relationships and collaborate with older generations. Strengthening intergenerational relationships is often the fundamental goal

> for language reclamation projects; a goal which can often surpass the impact of the dictionary or phrasebook itself (Brinklow et al., 2020, p. 3).

Our inherent blood memory carries our original sound, our original language, despite the influences against us, we continue to fight, advocate and learn our languages – "sounds allow memory to survive, even under strong influence" (Brinklow et al., 2020, p. 1).

The community of Orang Asli has the largest community of Semai peoples, a place where "Indigenous communities come from a non-literate tradition, their knowledge and culture passed from one generation to another orally" (Renganathan & Kral, 2018, p. 2). Historically this was true for many if not of all of our nations, "sometimes literature resources and practices such as books, magazines, radio, television and internet have had a damaging effect on oral traditions" (Renganathan & Kral, 2018, p. 2). Disruption can occur due to the potential decline in interest amongst the younger generation, which is driven by the abundance and availability of various media sources. This can undermine the authenticity of oral practices. Additionally, the peer pressure young people experience to conform can lead them to favor popular broadcasting media, which is readily accessible.

A project described in this paper involved the development of two short films involving digital technology and film-making that initiated great interest in the language and culture, especially amongst the youth. The youth were involved in the production, working together as a team developing a community resource for generations to come. The digital documentation project enabled the young adults to participate in a meaningful role in cultural traditional practices in a modern way and placed them in a crucial position as "knowledge holders and conduit of cultural information for the next generation" (Renganathan & Kral, 2018, p. 3).

Nurturing and supporting our young people, encourages them in finding their place as future leaders and allows the potential for cultural and language stability for the future.

Historically, having a strong foundation in Huluniixsuwwakan (Lunaapeew language) allowed us to traditionally pass on songs, stories, teachings, and traditions. However, due to colonial pressure, Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit can no longer pass down these knowledges orally. With the use of archival materials, these knowledges could be recovered. A positive example of such is found in Western Australia, where they were able to repatriate their traditional songs from archival materials. "Audio recordings of old songs stored in archives such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies collection and the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures are significant resources in efforts to revitalise Aboriginal song traditions" (Bracknell, 2019, p. 2). Audio archives continue to be helpful to communities with limited speakers, "in contemporary processes of revival and revitalization, Indigenous people are increasingly engaging with audio originally recorded at times when the academy considered Indigenous cultures to be irrevocably doomed" (Bracknell, 2019, p. 4) Reviving such ceremonial song and tradition can be a very powerful act, only contemplating the impacts on the people. It's a spiritual reconnection with your ancestors; "however diminished, songs, language can enable powerful articulations of identity, belonging and connection" (Bracknell, 2019, p. 6). These songs dated back to the 1950's and 1980's and have since been reclaimed.

> Repatriated recordings may also reaffirm intimate personal relationships between people and ancestors, country and kin; contribute to understandings of local history; become useful when integrated into community and public education projects and demonstrate

> continuity of tradition, which can be especially useful in the articulation of Indigenous rights (Bracknell, 2019, p.11).

Pronunciation of our original language becomes a central part of why archival recordings are so important. However, Foote et al. have found that, "pronunciation has been neglected in both theoretical and pedagogical approaches to L2 learning" (2013, p. 1). The term 'L2 learners' refers to second language learners. Foote et al. also found that only 10 percent of teaching in language learning situations was focused on pronunciation, in comparison to vocabulary, which was 70 percent of the focus, and grammar, which was the remaining 20 percent. The episodes of guided pronunciation were also recognized as infrequent, only averaging at 2 episodes per hour of instruction. A heavily relied upon teaching method was corrective feedback, which, although it was seen as effective, did not contain any proactive methods that could improve pronunciation.

Recognized as a severely endangered language according to the UNESCO Language and vitality scale is the language of the Cherokee Nation. Cherokee teachers, speakers, learners and administrators discuss concerns on "how difficult it is for learners to accurately perceive and pronounce Cherokee sounds, particularly tone and vowel length distinction" (Herrick et al., 2015, p. 13). Pronunciation of heritage language is a very important part of language reclamation, as communities have stated. In an article written by Bird and Kell, they share some insight from interviewees on ways to develop and support accurate pronunciation by suggesting that newer speakers should take the time to listen to recordings. This supports intonation and "the hearing is connected to the ability to the able to say it and vice versa." (Bird & Kell, 2017). Lack of L1 speakers limits the opportunities to learn language transmission in a more natural environment, therefore listening to legacy recordings can recreate some of this context for new learners. Another noted strategy is to begin learning at an early age, when more difficult sounds

are more easily mastered and children are not afraid to make mistakes. With access to few or no speakers, archival material has proven to be a great resource for more accurate pronunciation.

When I was learning from my Elders, mentors and teachers, they didn't know the writing system, they only knew how to speak. I learned my language by listening to them speak. I picked up the tone and could hear when endings would change depending on what or who they were talking about. I found this to be something that has stuck with me as I have not forgotten the sound that the language makes. Although the Elders that I worked with the most are no longer here, I find that the next best thing is a recording of a speaker. It is a good reminder and a fantastic learning tool for any learner.

New techniques such as linking QR codes to archival recordings allows learners to access this material from the comfort of their own homes. “The discovery of each language recording or documentation artifact constitutes a legacy resource and a uniquely documented instance of spoken language behaviour” (Galla, 2016, p.1149). With the widespread availability of cell phones, accessing and listening to our language through a QR code is now just a touch away.

All this work with sound documents is developed to fulfil its ultimate goal: the diffusion of the oral contents. The dissemination of the recorded voices represents an invaluable means for transmitting traditional knowledge, and for securing the survival of the ancient words of endangered languages. (Brinklow et al., 2020, p. 9)

Reflecting on the various ways in which revitalization of a language can be reclaimed when you have one fluent Elder speaker remaining, the different concepts that can contribute to the healthy resurgence of language appear not to be one-time solutions. There are many factors and differences, one of which may work for one, but may not work for another. There was little research on the Lunaapeew language, with only documentation of its grammatical structure from

a linguistic perspective. This is foreign in nature to those of us who are language advocates. I find that there are little documentation and few resources to rely upon for revitalization efforts. In this project, I have provided one example of how to use those resources that are available: Having access to recordings and a little bit of technological experience can prove to be an effective avenue for language learners of Lunaapeew. From the earliest recording devices - like the wax cylinder, reel to reel, tapes, CD's, Mp3's - this shift illustrates the continuous audio capture and playback. The QR codes which are included in my project can be accessed from anywhere, requiring only an internet connection and a cell phone, which almost everyone in the community has. These recordings do need to be digitized into an MP3 format to contribute to their life expectancy and to be used for the purpose for which they were given.

Methodology

Oral History and storytelling for Indigenous communities are an integral part of our oral traditions (Archibald, 2008). They have always been a way of learning. Over the years, I have collected archival audio recordings, while listening to them, I transcribed them and presented them in a way that enables community members to learn Huluniixsuwaakan (Lunaapeew language) while connecting with ancestors.

Historically, stories took many days and were often heard many times. Each time, they offered a new lesson or a different way of receiving a teaching, meant to help growth and insight within. Exposure to oral history can be one of the earliest and most impactful ways for anyone to connect with language learning; it nurtures the spirit of the original language within, sparking imagination and helping with the understanding different environments, times and places.

Through the access of oral histories, telling, retelling, and interpretation broaden their awareness of other presences, perspectives, and values, making for a rich and engaging experience. “Our bodies collectively echo the sounds of our ancestors, the sounds of the land and Debwewin, the sound of our hearts” (Simpson, 2014, p. 110). This experience, intertwined with the incorporation of an original language into these recordings, will allow a learner to see themselves and hear the voice of their ancestors. What a powerful message and connection to the past. That connection has the power to pierce the spirits and minds of people, offering hope for years to come of a strong, stable relationship with the language of their ancestors.

This process is a form of retracing our history, looking back to see what was left for us. “The elders taught me about seven principles, what I term storywork: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, inter-relatedness and synergy” (Archibald, 2008, p. 3). Connecting with these archives allows that reciprocity to happen for all those Elders who have

gone on. It is our responsibility as Lunaapeew people to educate others, as we don't own the knowledge. "Of all the teachings we receive this one is the most important: Nothing belongs to you of what there is, of what you take, you must share" (George, 1996, p. 25).

Methods

This project employs several methods, including an ethnographic approach where I had in my possession audio tapes and CDS that I had analyzed and transcribed. Listening to language through stories, utterances, and cultural context are all elements that are vital to my community. I also employed oral history methods (Sociology Institute, 2025) by listening to numerous archival recordings and compiling them to create a way for the community to learn the language through the introduction of general vocabulary, one word at a time.

Additionally, the resource book that I have created includes a QR code, and each future book will also include a QR code, allowing community members to hear the spoken language and access the original sound. As part of the preparation for creating the first activity book, I performed a linguistic and grammatical analysis of the documented language for further study and used the written dictionary to compare recordings with the written word. My goal was to ensure that the words contained within the booklet would match our current dictionary. This allows for further study if learners want to search for variances in word use.

For many nights, I lay awake imagining how to begin this project. I initially believed that the recordings contained stories and thought I would create children's storybooks based on a recording from Roberta Miskokomon about the Killdeer and how that bird informs us when it's time to plant. However, this explanation was given in English; although it had cultural significance, it did not contain enough Lunaapeew language. After listening to a few recordings, I realized that the materials were not stories at all—they were word lists. The recordings consisted of isolated words and phrases, often without context and in no particular order. Because of this, constructing coherent storybooks directly from the audio proved impossible.

This realization led me to reimagine the project as an activity booklet featuring word lists paired with QR codes linking to the original recordings. The booklet includes colouring pages, matching activities, word searches, unscramble-the-word exercises, and other tasks that reinforce learning. By scanning the QR codes, learners can hear the authentic pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm of the language. Some of the recordings contain short story episodes that they are willing to share with the recorder. Often the speakers are reminded of memories and begin to share about words and phrases that have come to mind during the interview. Most requested phrases or words are categorized in some way, for example indoor kitchen terms has struck a memory and the speaker introduces a kinship term for my son. These episodes are so valuable for learners, and it gives a glimpse of what life was like.

Fortunately having many teachers during my language learning journey, most of them being women, however my first teacher that had spoken to me as a child, was my grandfather. A memory that will forever be in my heart, this encouraged me to choose a male speaker for this booklet, giving our language some balance and recognizing that both men and women from Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit have contributed to our communities in some way.

The technical process was challenging. I initially attempted to convert cassette tapes into digital files, purchasing three different tape players and various cords. None of these attempts was successful. I then turned to the CDs I had collected over the years. I purchased an external CD reader that allowed me to transfer the audio files—fortunately stored as MP4s—onto my laptop. These files were then uploaded to Google Drive and linked to a QR code generator.

However, technology doesn't come without error as the first QR code system required permission requests from anyone attempting to scan it, which made it unusable. With help from an experienced friend and many google searches and YouTube videos, I learned that I was using

the wrong QR generator. After deleting the old QR codes and creating new ones through the correct service, the link appeared to function properly. These links are sent to a google drive where the recording is located.

Significant Outcomes

The final resource is a community-accessible activity booklet that can be used in homes, schools, and cultural spaces. Its purpose is to support Lunaapeew language revitalization by ensuring that learners can hear the original sound of the language. Pronunciation, enunciation, and intonation are best learned by listening to Elder speakers, and these recordings allow us to honour their voices. If our Elders were still here, would they understand us? Would we sound like them? This work is a continuation of learning from our Elders—past, present, and future.

This is only the beginning of other projects yet to come, we have many recordings that can be utilized in many ways that will ensure members of Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit hear original voices. Topics discussed in this paper are The Talking Dictionary, Chunk Bank, film-making all which correlate with the use of archival recordings. These are some great ideas that can contribute to Lunaapeew Language revitalization for many generations to come.

As Nelson Mandela said, “If you talk to a man in his language, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart” (as quoted in Noah, 2017, p. 236).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shared the importance of pronunciation of the Lunaapeew language, the importance of audio archives and how they still have potential to contribute to Indigenous Language Revitalization no matter how long ago these recordings were recorded. Collecting and revitalizing archival audio recordings is essential as we work to preserve the Lunaapeew language and its sound. Though some recordings may be imperfect, they remain powerful tools for cultural continuity and language learning. These archives, in collaboration with the use of technology, have taken a front row seat in some communities. Language is constantly shifting, as are our communities, and we are losing knowledge keepers all the time. Finding ways to continue to pass on knowledge is important to our survival as Lunaapeew people.

Creating meaningful resources from these materials requires patience and dedication, but the outcome—a renewed connection between present-day learners and ancestral voices—is invaluable. This project marks the beginning of a longer journey that will require collaboration, ongoing learning, and community engagement.

Our language is a living part of who we are. By honouring the past and engaging actively in revitalization today, we help ensure that Lunaapeew Huluniixsuwaakan will continue to echo through future generations.

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Appendix A

Lunaapeew Language Activity Booklet

1

This activity booklet draws on archival recordings from the 1980s. On June 19, 1980 Enoch Jacobs a member of Eelunaapeewi Lahkeewiit Nation was recorded and supported the creation of our only dictionary. The booklet features general vocabulary, weather terms, household terms, pluralization and is followed by matching, colouring and word search activities. The recording also shares episodes of storytelling and memories from the speaker.

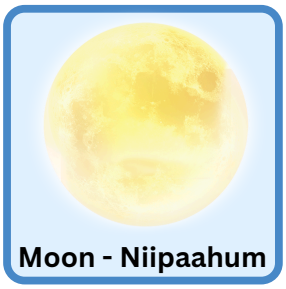
Created for beginner learners of Lunaapeew, this booklet can be shared at home with young children. It offers written words, visuals, recordings, and activities to help reinforce language learning.

QR Code to Audio

Medweanakwedokwe,
(Velma Noah-Nicholas)

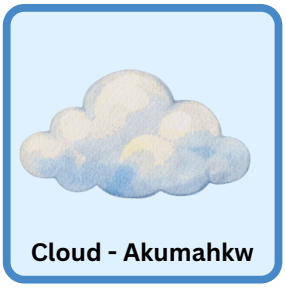
Table of Contents

GENERAL VOCABULARY
ENOCH JACOBS 1980

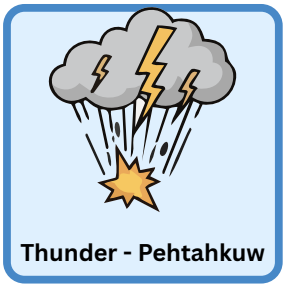

Moon - Niipaahum


My son - Ngwiisus


Star - Aalangweew


Cloud - Akumahkw


Rain - Sookulaan


Thunder - Pehtahkuw


Shiney - Waasuieexiin


Light - Waasulaaniikan


Shine - Waasuleew


Snowing - Wiineew


Windy - Kshaxun


Tornado - Kiitxun

unscramble the words

paaniihum _____

iisusngw _____

naawlageew _____

makuahkw _____

soolunaak _____

tahpehkuw _____

asuleexiinwa _____

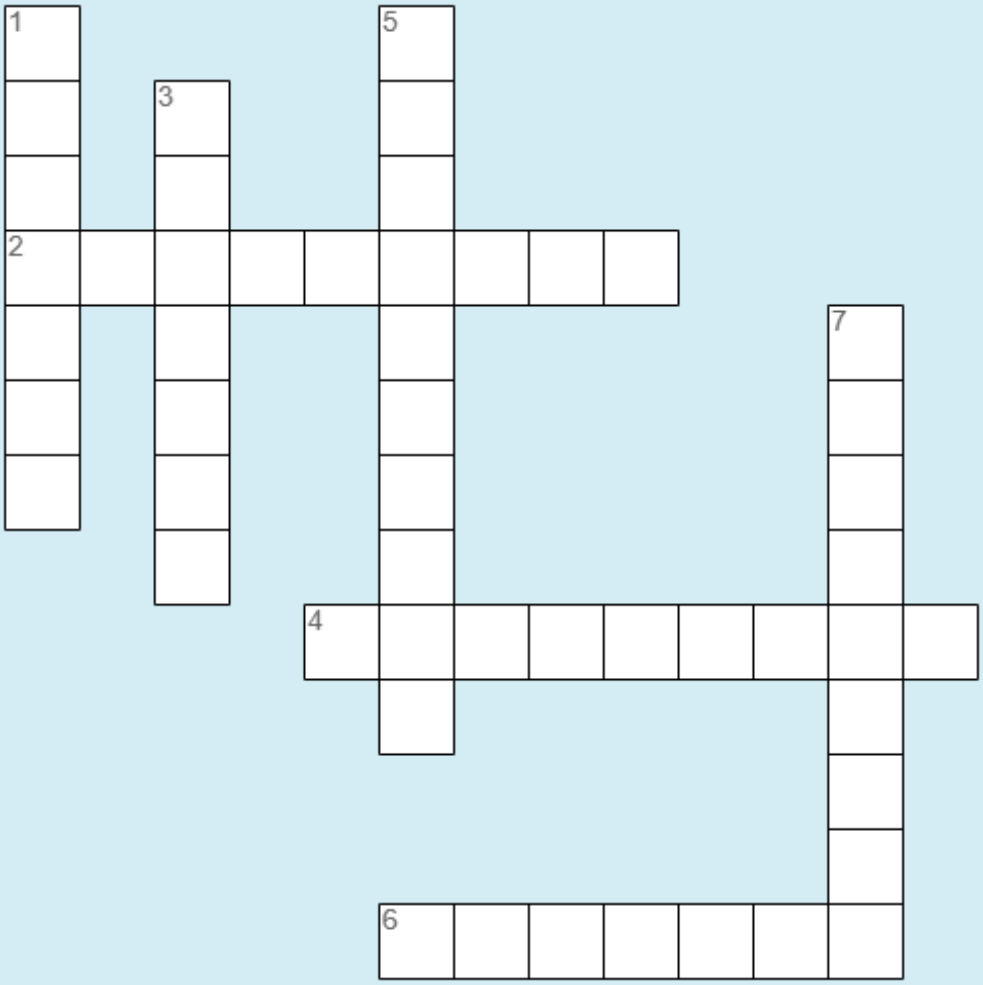
lewaniikanasue _____

laaswuleew _____

niiweew _____

xunksha _____

kiitxun _____



DOWN

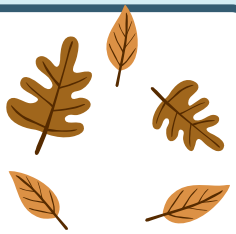
1. snowing
3. my son
5. star
7. rain

ACROSS

2. moon
4. thunder
6. windy

Vocabulary List #2

Leaf - Waniipakw



Leaves - waniipakwal

ice-Mohkamuy

Sleet - Mohkamiilaan

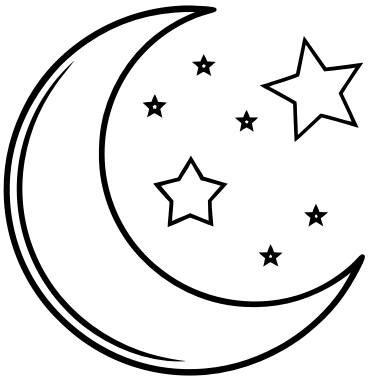
Water - Mbuy

He's drink water- Mbuy muneew

I'm thirsty - Ngatoosmwi

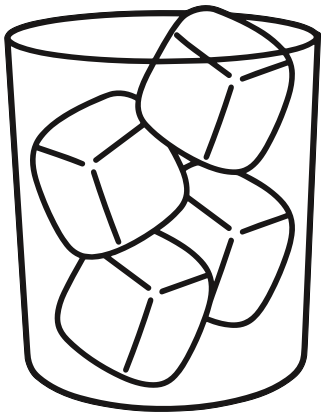
He wants to drink water - Neeka katoosumuw mbuy

kteekhiiikeel

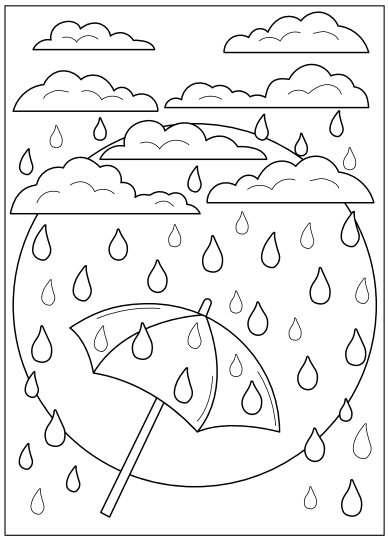


Niipaahum waak aalangweew

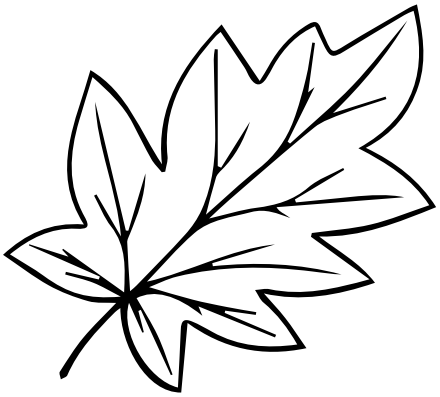
mbuy



Mohkamuy



sookulaan waak akumahkwut



Waniipakw

Waniipkwal

Unscramble the Words

pakwiinaw _____

waliipakwan _____

kamuyohm _____

kammohiilaan _____

bumy _____

bumy neemuw _____

nagootsimw _____

aneek kasootumuw yumb _____

Household Items

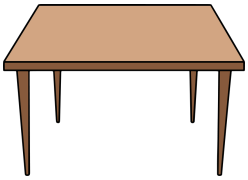
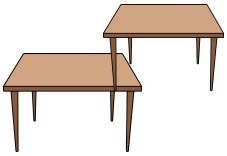


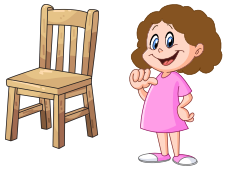
Table - Eehundaxpoon



Tables -
Eehundaxpoonal

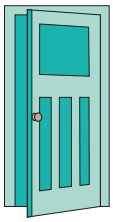
Chair - Ahpapoon

Chairs - Ahpapoonal

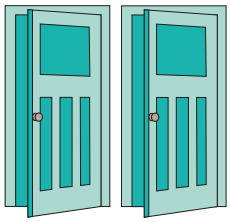


My chair -
Nii ndahpoonum

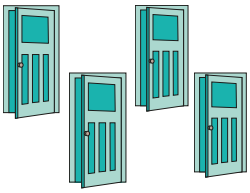
My chairs -
Nii ndahpoonal



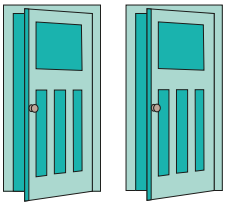
Door - Kpahoon



Doors - Kpahoonal

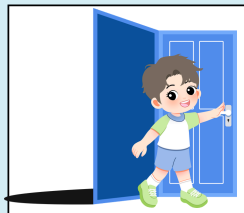


Four Doors -
Neewunool Kpahoonal



Big doors -
xwaachu-kpahoonal

One Big Door - Mayaat
Xwaachi-Kpahoon

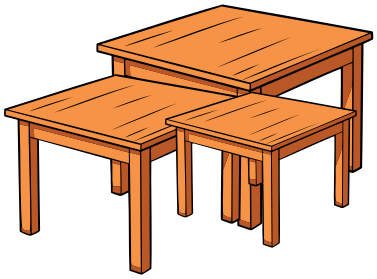


Close the door -
Kpah na kpahoon

Match the proper picture with the Lunaapeew word

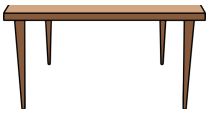
ahpapoonal

kpahoon



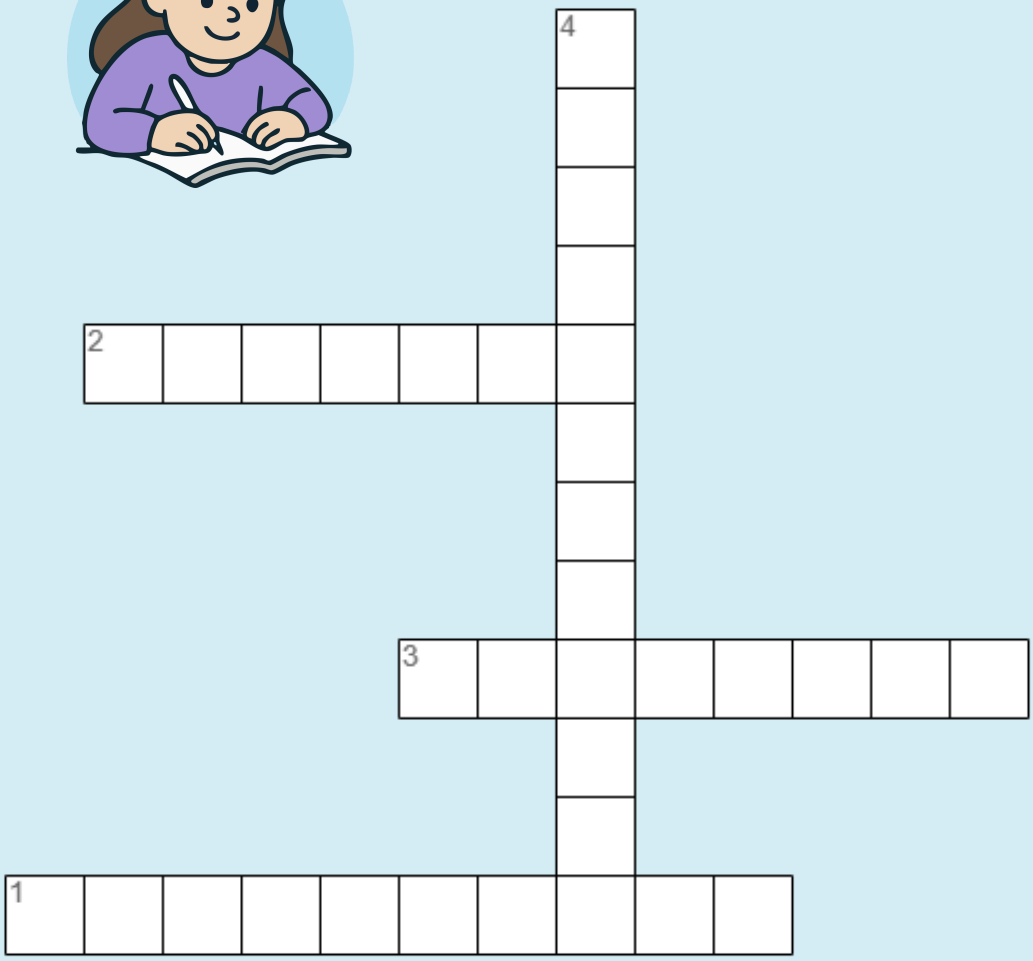
ehundaxpoonal

ahpapoon



ehundaxpoon

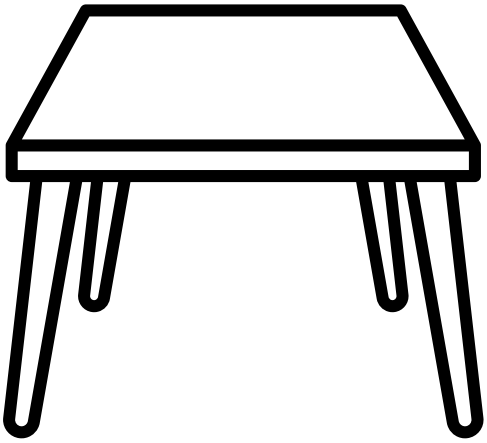
11

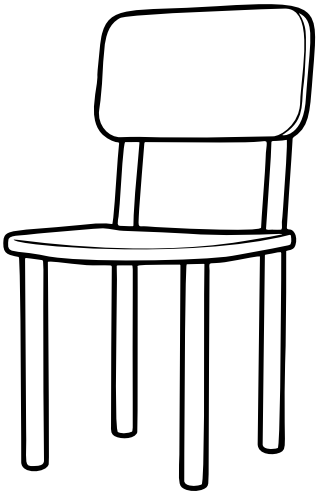


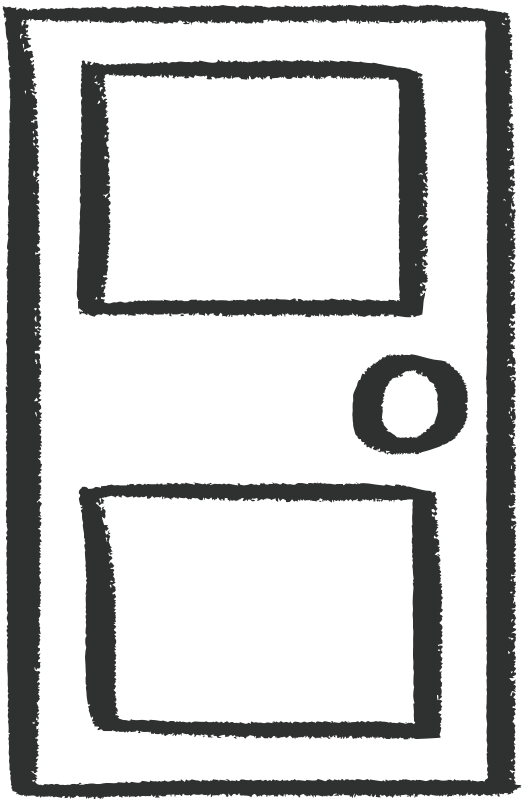
ACROSS
1. more then one of what we sit on
2. we close it
3. sit on it

DOWN
4. eat supper at it

kteekhiiikeel

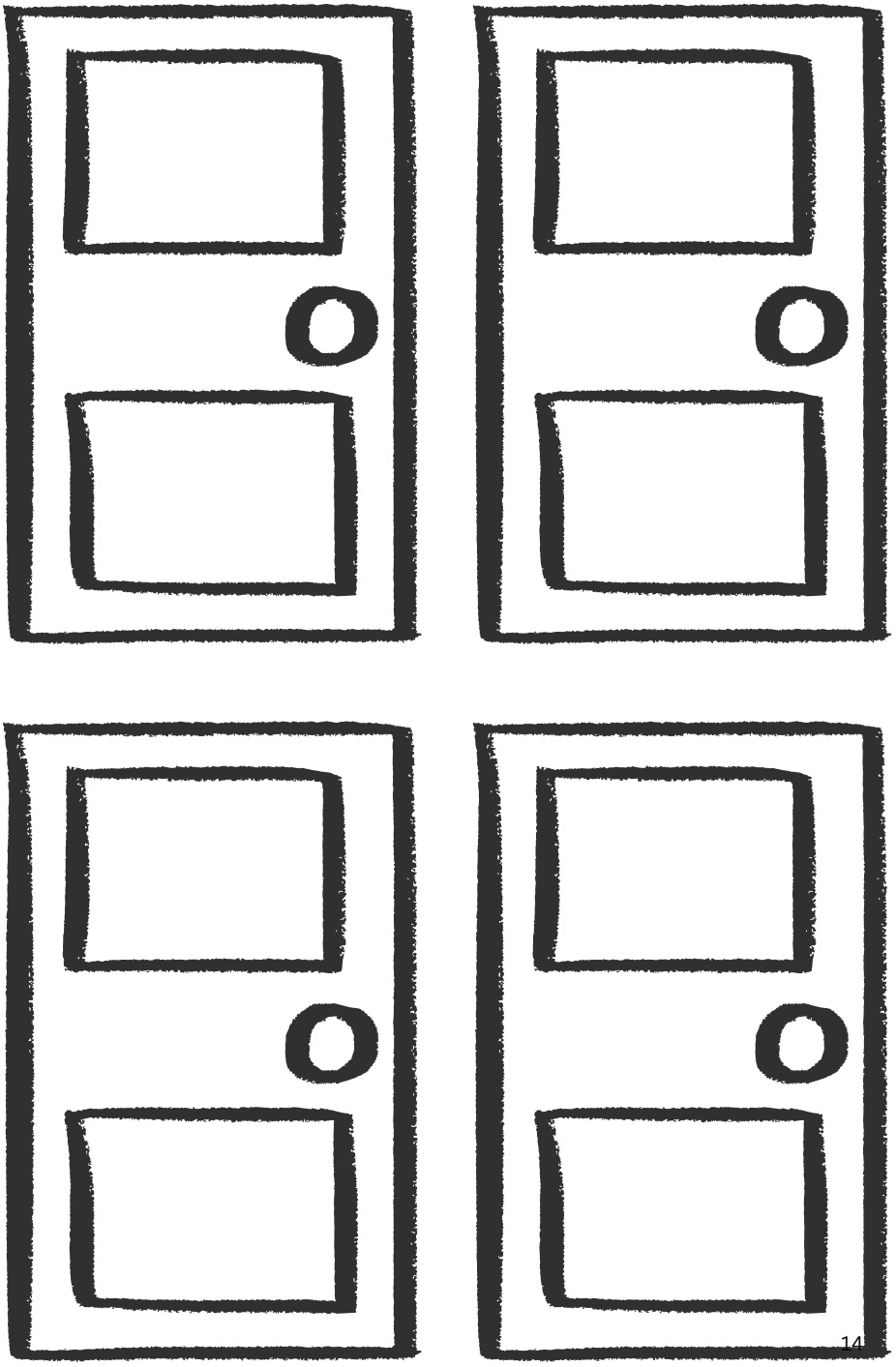






13

Kteekhiikeel
Neewunool kpahoonal



UNSCRAMBLE THE LUNAAPEEW WORDS

LANEEHUNDAXPOO _____

APOONPAH _____

LAPAPOHONA _____

NIINDUMAHPOON _____

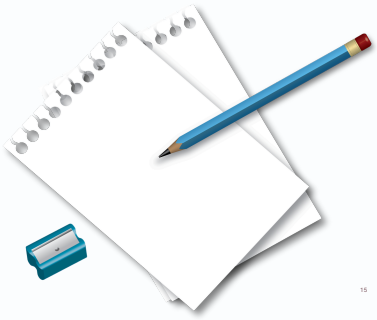
LIIN DANOHOPNA _____

HKAPHOON _____

LAKPAHOON _____

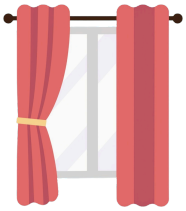
XACHAWI-KOONPAHNAL _____

TAMAYAT WAACHIX-HOONKPA _____



Household Items

eeheeshundeekan



kehkshuteek

kehkshuteekal

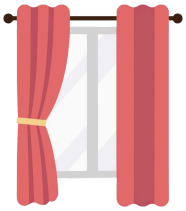
hoosus

kshuteew

16

Write the correct word from the list

eeheeshundeekan
kehkshuteek
hoosus
kehkshuteekal
kshuteew



17

Word Search

P G R A P A C L C I N O H Q P L B A T B S P X I S P M N Z T
X L F D P Q R Q O Z F Z U W E S H L Q W H D Z N K D L H V D
V Z K K S H U T E E W N S F S A D D S C T Q U I P G T E A C
I J M P Y R T K I I T X U N M O I X O Q D F C E A S M S K G
L A E P E H T A H K U W V N V P O P L Q Z T H R H W T L S E
N M W W E E H U N D A X P O O N S K Y P C V I M O E L T H O
V C A B A L C M G W S Q T Z A M O P U B C S M B O H B P A M
V J B W E A W O G G C J E Y O Y S F Z L R M B Q N P T H X Y
W M H S D P S I W N Y Q U U J C X A E E A S Z A A E A L U R
I A L Z P K G U I T P Z H X A D C I M E C A F F L M N H N C
N T A L N R E T L N R O H T K I K X F H S G N W W O T G P P
T X E S E C U H E A E H V J X A T B Q E H M W A G H I V P M
L E K T U L D N K G A E P U F H P T H E G E H N T K M W V Y
A M A F D L I K I S K N W P P C G B E S W M O I U A H M S S
A E S H K W E N N I H S I C M T U Q E H Y H X I M M O S H D
L I A L E K H E G R P U S I T G L S E U Y I F P I I O Y F X
A Z K B H H O P W A L A T I K H N F H N S C E A Q I S G J S
N Q U A K K G F J O T I A E Y A R C U D J X N K V L U O C H
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E R H P U G I L I M A O V S K M W K A K P A I L K N S A K L
E G K H T P N S I G V Y H J M Q A A X A Q S I Y C Y Y H P K
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U S B W E E Y H O Y W Y M B U Y I H O Z R L U W I F H A A Q
X O N K K A W G Z B C I E O L D I Y O W U E S V L N K P H F
C V H G A A X T R A B E L K A S P O N D M E R U N L K O O B
C E D M L L U M A H P A P O O N A L A D N X N X L P Q O O Q
A K U Z P P R R K N Z F V K B E K E L T U I G Y V F D N N C
F Q T N B K I O M O H K A M U Y W K S X M I P H B F J E Z G
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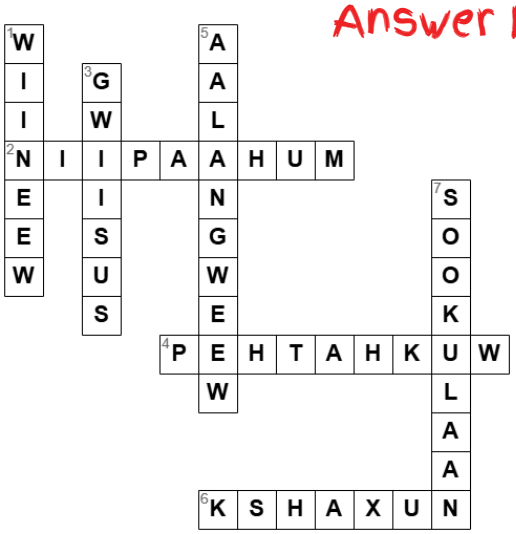
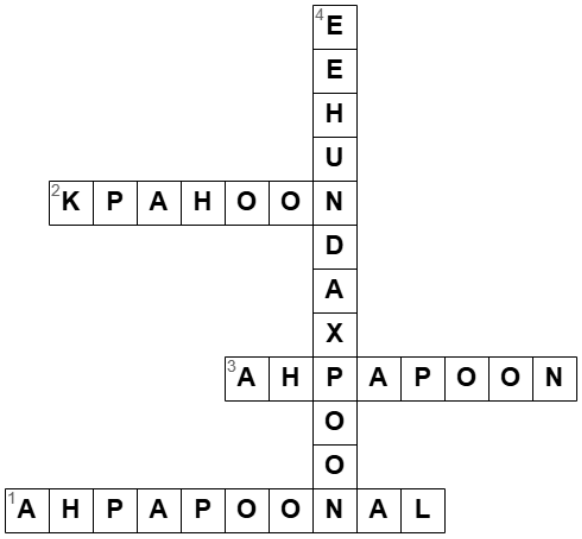
Answer Key





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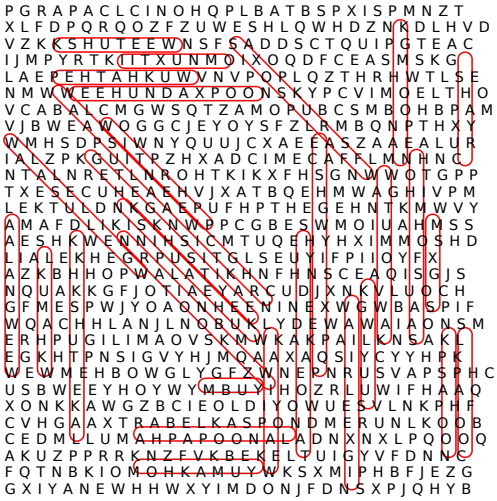
Word Search



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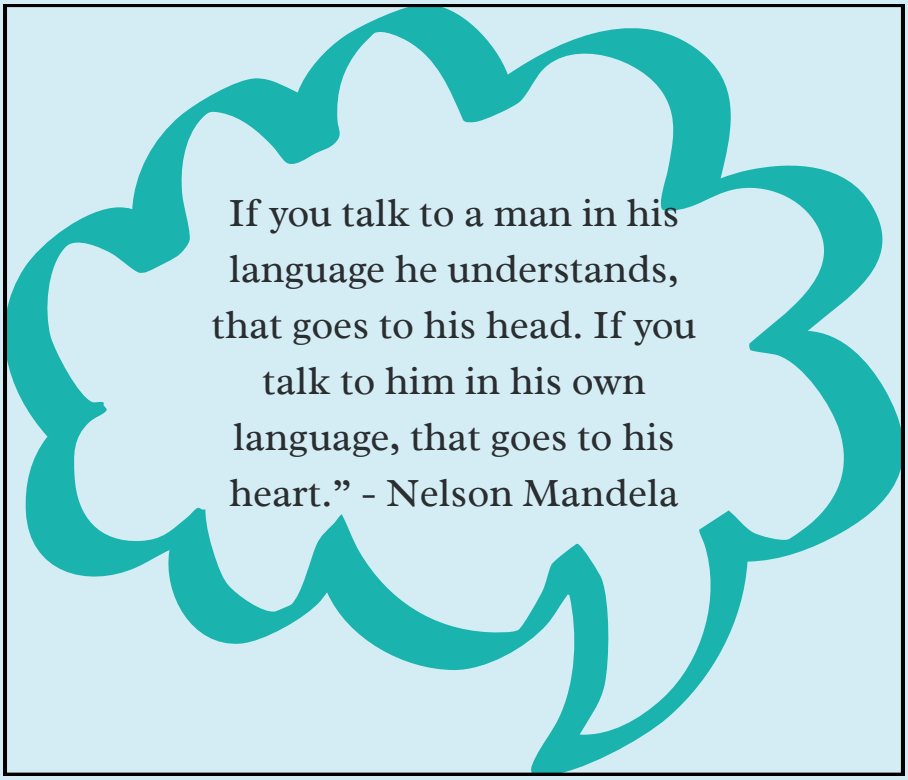

Medweanakwedokwe,

(Velma Noah-Nicholas)