

Narratives of Language, Health, and Identity:
Pursuing well-being through Indigenous language revitalization

by

Dale McCreery

B.A., Canadian University College, 2006

M.A., University of Victoria, 2013

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Linguistics

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Abstract

Over the past two centuries, the Indigenous communities of western Canada have faced monumental changes in the context of colonization and racism. While a small portion of these changes have been negotiated by these communities themselves, most have been imposed, resulting in rapidly changing identities and decreasing levels of well-being. One of the most prominent changes in the social domain has been the experience of language loss caused by practices and policies at Indian Residential Schools, and their aftermath for individuals and communities. For many communities the loss of voice is inseparable from several other significant experiences of disempowerment, all of which have left indelible marks on Indigenous identities. Within this context, today's language activists are working to revitalize Indigenous languages, not simply to restore a symbol of identity, but for the much larger goal of undoing impacts of disempowering colonial experiences and narratives. This study argues that the methods involved in Indigenous language reclamation and resurgence should reflect the goals of building well-being for individuals and communities. It reviews how the formation and maintenance of Indigenous identity connects language and communication practices to well-being. It examines the undermining and replacement of practices that support well-grounded and agentive Indigenous identities, and then turns to what communities are doing in order to reverse these changes and restore agency and connection. Finally, it looks in depth at how similar programs can be adopted within the field of Indigenous language revitalization, including several concrete examples from the author's specific context as an Indigenous person with wide experience in language documentation and as a teacher of the Nuxalk and Michif languages, ranging from curricula to unit plans to lesson plans to supporting resources and ways to adapt various common teaching methods. This study shares the author's personal critical reflection on the use of methods and resources designed to increase the agency of learners, as well as reflections on how to develop and use materials and methods that also increase learners' sense of security as Indigenous people and establish their grounding in place, in community, and in practice.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee:.....	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures.....	viii
List of Appendices.....	ix
Dedication	x
Acknowledgment.....	xi
1. My path to language work.....	1
1.1 Before you dive in.....	5
1.1.1 A descriptive outline	6
1.2 Development of my worldview	7
1.2.1 Flash forward: To the patch.....	7
1.2.2 The stories that started me off.....	9
1.2.3 Developing a practice of introspection	9
1.3 My journey to a focus on a holistic framework.....	12
1.3.1 Connecting with Grandpa	13
1.3.2 Developing a broader identity.....	15
1.3.3 Introduced to language.....	16
1.3.4 College	17
1.3.5 Facing darkness	17
1.4 Taking the patch home with me.....	23
1.4.1 Applying holism to revitalization	25
1.5 Broadening my practice	28
1.6 Determining community goals.....	32
1.6.1 A smayusta understand of well-being.....	34
1.6.2 My summarized goals	38
2. Language and well-being	40
2.1 Introduction	40
2.1.1 Is there a connection between language and well-being?.....	40
2.1.2 What is this “language” of which you speak?	42
2.1.3 Determining mechanisms	44
2.2 Diving into Identity	45
2.2.1 What I mean by story or narrative.....	46
2.2.2 Factors in creating identity.....	46
2.2.3 What can identity look like?	49
2.2.4 Maximizing connections	57

2.3 Summary.....	60
3. So, just what can hurt identity?	62
3.1 History of language loss.....	65
3.2 Narratives cutting off practice	70
3.2.1 Lack of positive examples.....	71
3.2.2 Elimination of family connections	71
3.2.3 Taught non-communication	72
3.2.4 Trauma and the ability to learn	73
3.2.5 Trauma and the narrowing of reflection	74
3.2.6 Impacts of language loss on changing identity	75
3.3 Narratives cutting off grounding	78
3.3.1 Impacts to a sense of belonging.....	79
3.3.2 Losing ownership of health	81
3.3.3 The role of language in strengthening identity	84
3.3.4 Language made a character in a story	85
3.3.5 Sorting through language as identity.....	86
3.3.6 Narratives of education	90
3.3.7 Impact of institutional Englishes	91
3.4 Summary.....	92
4. Building and maintaining an identity that supports well-being.....	94
4.1 Terms	99
4.2 Building practices to support the development of agency	99
4.2.1 Power to speak	100
4.2.2 The context of speech.....	103
4.2.3 Examples of speech	107
4.2.4 Feedback loops and well-being as a journey.....	110
4.2.5 Telling stories of resilience and well-being	119
4.2.6 Self-exploration and reflection.....	136
4.3. Grounding	152
4.3.1 Comprehensive in scope	153
4.3.2 Increasing in depth	156
4.3.3 A sense of belonging in family and community	158
4.3.4 A sense of belonging in place and knowledge	161
4.3.5 Broader applications of grounding for language teaching.....	170
4.4 Grounding is not a substitute for practice	173

4.5 Summarizing well-being through learning.....	177
4.5.1 Visual summary	178
5. Using curriculum and materials to support well-being	182
5.1 Building a foundation for connection and communication: Level 1 Curriculum	187
5.1.1 Reasons for targeting young learners	187
5.1.2 Foundational big ideas.....	189
5.2 Widening the big picture: Looking broader than a curriculum.....	197
5.3 Ensuring breadth of connections: Developing unit plans.....	200
5.4 Building a foundation for connections in each class: Activity descriptions	204
5.4.1 Activity concept 1 – Which do you prefer?	205
5.4.2 Activity concept 2 – Reviewing the day	206
5.4.3 Activity concept 3 – Building background knowledge through language	208
5.4.4 Reflections on implementation	212
5.5 Integrating language content and connection: Adult lesson plans	220
5.5.1 Overcoming challenges to develop holistic grammar-focused lessons	221
5.5.2 Building and reinforcing connections in single lessons.....	224
5.5.3 Reflections on Implementation	232
5.6 High school curriculum	233
5.6.1 High school big ideas	235
5.7 Fully engaged: grounding and connection in an interdisciplinary unit outline.....	236
5.9 Reflecting back: Conclusion	238
6. Looking to the future.....	239
6.1 Transmitting well-being to future generations	239
6.1.1 Multi-generational transmission matters	240
6.1.2 The journey from camper to Rediscovery guide	241
6.1.3 Going beyond independent reflection through storytelling	242
6.1.4 Turning learners into teachers.....	248
6.1.5 Inclusivity	250
6.1.6 Summary	251
6.2 Taking advantage of the element of time: Summer camp schedule	252
6.2.1 Schedule.....	254
6.3 Recommendations.....	258
6.3.1 A restatement of major recommendations.....	258
6.3.2 Broader recommendations	262
6.3.3 Directions for future research	266

6.4 Concluding thoughts.....	267
References	270
Further reading	279
Chapter 1 Further reading	279
Chapter 2 Further reading	280
Chapter 3 Further reading	281
Chapter 4 Further reading	282
Appendices	285
Appendix 1: Level 1 curriculum. Big ideas.....	286
Appendix 2: Unit plans.....	295
Appendix 3: Telling the mushrooms apart: Verb endings for specific situations.....	302
Appendix 4: High school curriculum.....	310
Appendix 5: Snut’li Creek unit outline (grades 7-12).....	317
Appendix 6: Sample summer-camp schedule.....	319

List of Figures

Figure 1: Viewing Learners as being on a Journey	108
Figure 2: Methods or Resources Arranged by Agency	110
Figure 3: The Four Quadrants of Processing	137
Figure 4: A Continuum of Processing Methods	138
Figure 5: The Processing Pinnacle	138
Figure 6: Visualizing the Learning Process from the Perspective of Pursuing Well-being	170
Figure 7: Big Ideas from Nuxalk Level 1	182
Figure 8: Turning the Curriculum into Concrete Plans	190
Figure 9: A Visual Schedule Based on Pictures Taken the Previous Day	199
Figure 10: Wiki Article on Robins	203
Figure 11: Contexts for use: 3rd Person Objects, 1st and 2nd Person Subjects	214
Figure 12: Contexts for use: 1st and 2nd Person Subjects and Objects	215
Figure 13: Brainstorming Grid: How to Use Ulic- to Choose	222
Figure 14: High School Big Ideas	227
Figure 15: A Revised Processing Pinnacle	237
Figure 16: A Revised Four Quadrants of Processing	238

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Level 1 Curriculum. Big Ideas	267
Appendix 2: Unit Plans	276
Appendix 3: Telling the Mushrooms Apart – Verb Endings for Specific Situations	283
Appendix 4: High School Curriculum	291
Appendix 5: Snut'li Creek Unit Outline (Grades 7-12)	298
Appendix 6: Sample Summer-Camp Schedule	300

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all those who have told me stories with the expectation that I would learn something from it. To my family, the elders who have taught me, and the students who have spoken up, this thesis was me doing my best to hear you.

Acknowledgment

First of all, I acknowledge my family for supporting me through the past ten years of this work, and for giving me the foundation required to start it. I would also like to thank the Acwshalcta school board for giving me permission to share my reflections on my teaching experiences in this thesis for the benefit of other teachers and language workers. As well, I would like to acknowledge that this thesis draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. This support gave me the freedom to spend more time researching, and far more time reflecting on this research in the company of others whose feedback and personal reflection made this thesis far more thoughtful than it would have been had I not been able to engage in these ongoing discussions. In particular, I would like to thank David Barrett and Ted Campbell for their constant feedback, as their ideas have had an outsized impact on my ability to tie everything together into a coherent whole, and also Dr. Clyde Tallio for our many sessions exchanging stories and talking about them, as well as for his feedback on portions of this work at various stages over the years.

I would like to acknowledge the importance of the time spent with Michif elders Grace Zoldy, Verna DeMontigny, Harvey Peltier, and Norman Fleury, as well as elder Heather Souter who started me off in a good direction and has also checked in regularly to remind me of the importance of how we do what we do. I would also like to acknowledge the outsized influence of time spent working with Beatrice Elliot, Arthur Pootlass, and Amos Tallio, all of whom made clear how important it was to do this work for future generations. I miss them deeply. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the tireless support, patience, and friendship of my supervisors, Dr. Li-Shih Huang and Dr. Leslie Saxon. Without them supporting and encouraging me along the way, I know that this work would never have been completed.

1. My path to language work

I remember lying on the warm dirt of our family garden as a kid, listening to CBC radio, listening to the Dead Dog Cafe Comedy hour, written by Tom King. All of a sudden, Gracie's voice said "And now it's time for conversational Cree! Today's phrase is one guaranteed to make Native people happy wherever you go, it is: Sôniyâw wiya namakêkwây – money is no object." And remember laughing, and trying to repeat exactly what was said, because I wanted to learn Grandpa's language. And I remember also, lying in bed at college and hearing Tom's Massey Lecture – The Truth about Stories (2003), and hearing Tom say "The truth about stories, is that that's all we are." and thinking "wow, that's really true, and listening as he proceeded to tell the same story five nights in a row, going over and over the same idea until I really got it. The truth about stories, is that that's all we are. It's stories that situate us for ourselves and for others. For example, here's a story you need to know in order to understand this thesis.

My name is Dale McCreery, a Métis man born and raised in Hazelton, BC. I started learning to speak my language around ten years old, beginning a journey that eventually took me to a mentor/apprentice program in Manitoba through which I became a speaker. Along the way I taught ESL and completed an MA in linguistics. Because of my experience working with my Michif language, I was asked to assist with language documentation work first in Klemtu with the Kitasoo/Xaixais community and the Sgüüxs language, and then in Bella Coola with the Nuxalk Nation and the Nuxalk language.

After arriving I spent a number of years doing language documentation, a period of time during which my most important relationships were through the medium of the Nuxalk language, gradually transitioning into language teaching. Since 2014 I have taught primarily in two contexts: weekly community evening language classes with a mixture of children and adults, and in Acwsalcta school, a

K4-12 band school primarily serving students from the Nuxalk Nation. Over the past decade I have taught all of these ages at one time or another, including two years teaching in a K4 immersion language nest affiliated with the school.

After several years of work, I was adopted into the Snuxyaltwa family from Ats'aaxlh, by my now brother, Peter Snow. This adoption had the intended result of formally making me answerable to members of the community regarding this ongoing work. In 2018, still in Bella Coola, I married my wife, Lori McCreery, and live and work here to this day. That's my story.

Now here's a story of this thesis. This project is the result of a large amount of reflection on my life and practices. The specific practices being reflected on are my own living out of my identity as an Indigenous person over the past forty years, and my experiences as a person involved in language revitalization work for the past fifteen, first with Michif, then with Sgüüxs, and then with the Nuxalk language in the community I now call home. The current thesis draws on reflections on my practice as a teacher primarily between 2016 and 2024

At this point I would like to share the way I have gone about this research, what is called my research paradigm. In doing this, I have appreciated Shawn Wilson's (2001) paper, "What is indigenous research methodology?" In it, he says the following: "To me, a paradigm is simply a label for a set of beliefs that go together that guide my actions. So a research paradigm is a set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge that go together to guide your actions as to how you're going to go about doing your research." Wilson divides this into four narratives that work together. The first is your beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), the second is the way you think about that reality (epistemology), the third is how you use that way of thinking to discover more about that reality (research methodology), and the fourth is your ethics or morals about how you do this (called axiology).

In this project, the first thing I want to tell you is that all of these are my own. That's not to say I produced them out of nothing, as while my understanding of them is almost entirely grounded in my own experiences, many of these ideas were first shared with me by others referencing their own experiences. Instead, I am saying that when I embarked on exploring and sharing these ideas, I chose to only do this work in ways that I had already fully grounded in my own experience and practice.

For me, this grounding begins with my understanding of how we perceive and make sense of the world (epistemology), something I alluded to in my opening paragraph, Tom King's (2003, p. 2) statement "the truth about stories is that that's all we are." We learn through our senses, which we make sense of with the mind, an incredible connection making machine, and in order for those connections to impact our perceptions of other connections to reality, we combine them in to narratives, into stories. It is through this process that we mediate our experiencing of reality.

Next is how I understand reality (my ontology). We all accept that there is a physical reality to our world that we engage in, but in this research I also rely strongly on what I have called social reality – the idea that our observations and interactions with other beings, including humans, are an equally important touchstone by which we can evaluate our actions, our assumptions, or the validity and usefulness of the stories we tell ourselves and others. An equally important aspect of this reality is the fact that we exist in time. Not in a moment in time, but in a journey through time. It is this journey that allows for exploration of cause and effect, and it is a recognition of the reality of this journey that allows us to see others as also being beings in story, characters in their own complex web of narratives. It is this recognition of time that allows us to engage and build relationships with, not only observations of, these physical and social realities.

Third is how we learn in this environment – how I have chosen to learn in this environment (my

research methodology). In this thesis (and in life) I understand learning as a two-part process – first through engagement with reality, and secondly through the reflective work of placing that engagement in the context of other observations or other experiences. This reflection results in stories, in narratives of connection, which themselves can be used as tools of engagement with reality and with other narratives. Some of what follows is observation, some is reflection on the stories and experiences of others, and still more is the result of meta-reflection over the whole process, a process of repeated reflection, questioning, and meaning making that for me has taken a number of years of circling around and through all these experiences and stories.

Finally, there are my ethics or morals in relation to research (my axiology). This project exists in relationship. First, it is in relationship to myself – I will not compromise my voice or values, even if it means taking far more time and reflection than I would like to share. This said, I understand that my identity is also a nexus of relationships and stories that reach far beyond myself and include friends, family, and community. Second, this project exists in relationship to the process by which I gained much of my knowledge, my insights, or my practices. It exists in relationship with the elders who shared language and responsibility with me through countless hours of working together creating language documentation for the purpose of helping future generations. It exists in relationship to my students, as it is my commitment to engage with them in the best way possible that has been my major motivation in much of this work. Finally, this project exists in relationship with other teachers in similar situations, as it was seeing other teachers burn out through unrealistic and unclear expectations in combination with inadequate or impossible preparation that has motivated me to do the work of sharing this body of reflection and example. Recognizing myself as being in relationship and engagement with reality means that those around me matter, and should be heard, seen, and supported. This recognition is the ethical and moral basis of how I have done this work. Depending on your familiarity with research methods, the

above description may have been enlightening, or it may have been somewhat overwhelming and really communicated much. If the latter, don't worry, read on and I will restate this methodology in the beginning of chapter 4.

1.1 Before you dive in

In this thesis I have set out to understand and present a model of the formation and practice of an identity that supports well-being. Based on this model I have looked at the impact of how we think and talk about language, and have used it as a tool for thinking about language teaching methods within a context where the goal of education is the well-being of learners and their community.

The process of developing this understanding has resulted in me working towards the following objectives as well:

1. When possible, use my own experiences to present the challenges surrounding language revitalization.
2. Use this foundation to explore in some detail how our history of language loss and our responses to it are interwoven with our pursuit of well-being.
3. Give you, the reader, an understanding of the narrative processes of identity formation and maintenance, especially as it intersects with language use and well-being, including the implications for pursuing well-being through language acquisition.
4. Give concrete examples of what this can look like in practice, and
5. Explore ways in which a goal of specifically *long-term and multigenerational* well-being can influence our practices.

The centrality of narrative to all of these perspectives, especially via meaning making, has heavily influenced how I have chosen to write this thesis, as I want my work to itself be an expression of

well-being, and to embody the practices I am promoting as much as possible. As a result, this work is a mixture of narrative and story, exploration and development of theoretical models, as well as presentations of resources and practices grounded in the presented models and previously shared experiences.

1.1.1 A descriptive outline

In my first chapter I share my own journey and practice as an individual engaged with questions of identity, well-being, and language. I look at how my experiences dealing with identity and well-being have influenced my theoretical understandings, including my approach to structuring this document, and how reflecting on this in turn has driven changes to my practice in other areas. In particular, I look at how this process has led me to a specific vision of a practice of well-being, which I describe both in my own terms (section 1.5) and in the terms used by the community where my work is situated (section 1.6.1).

In my second chapter I look more deeply at how the development and practice of a well-grounded, agentive identity is connected to both a practice of well-being and to healthy communication and use of language. I then use this model of identity formation to trace the impact of losses of well-being and language on the identities of indigenous individuals and communities, looking at how we arrived at our current context for pursuing language revitalization and resurgence.

In my third chapter I look at some of the implications of this model of well-being, especially on how we understand and pursue language education in the context of resurgence and promoting well-being, and in my fourth chapter I provide concrete examples of practice to illustrate most of the principles and ideas laid out in chapter 3.

In my fifth chapter, I look more deeply at the implications of pursuing empowerment and

connection as long-term goals, exploring some teaching methods as well as some resources that I have developed to support using these methods.

In my sixth and final chapter, I conclude by looking at the idea of ensuring that these practices supporting well-being can be self-sustaining, and by restating and expanding the recommendations that come from this perspective.

1.2 Development of my worldview

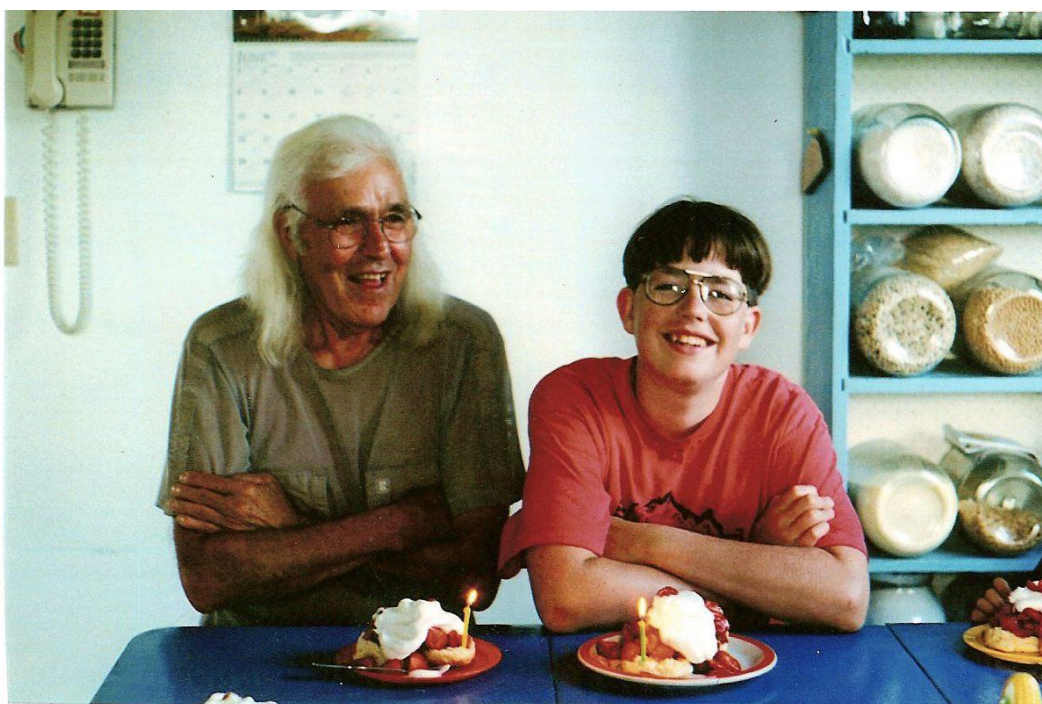
While it may be possible to live a life devoid of self-reflection and insecurities about your place in the world, in your communities and in some bigger picture, the reality of my own experience, and I suspect that of almost everyone else as well, is one of constant questioning of place and purpose, accompanied with never-ending wrestling over what our story is, and who gets to tell it, if anyone.

Much depends on the outcome of this process: our sense of self, the nature of our relationships to our family, social network, and broader community. On this outcome also hangs the question of our sense of belonging to the place and history we inhabit, and what knowledge and tools we can bring to bear as we face new challenges and decisions. What follows are some of those moments in my life that have both demanded the most meaning making, and also provided the grounding for that work. Out of these experiences have come the stories that make up much of the foundation of my practice as a person who uses and shares language.

1.2.1 Flash forward: To the patch

It was some time around 2012, and I was driving home from Victoria BC, heading north towards my home in Hazelton. I was feeling quite down, though I didn't realize it at the time. My grandfather with whom I had spent a far larger part of my childhood than I realized had passed away a couple years before while I was living in Rwanda, and one of my cousins had just passed away from cancer leaving

three small kids. My work situation before moving to Victoria had been difficult – a micromanaging boss in an internship that provided no direction – and the end result was that I had lost much of the self confidence I had developed over my life. Although I had definitely regained some of it, I was currently trying to write my Master’s thesis in linguistics, and no longer was able to focus longer than about five minutes at a time. I needed to get away.



My grandfather and myself, at a shared birthday party

All of us have events in our lives, in our family’s journeys, that shape our identities, and the ways we remember them and retell them later become our tools and reference points responding to what life sends us in the future, something I talk about more in the next chapter. In my case, these events have led me to spend the last decade of my life working in Bella Coola doing language documentation, curriculum development, language teaching, and eventually working in an immersion Language Nest teaching the Nuxalk Language. Over the following pages I will share some of the path that took me there, and how it shaped my goals in doing this work.

1.2.2 The stories that started me off

I was raised on stories: bible stories on tapes, bedtime stories read to me, winter evenings telling stories, and my favourite stories of all, my mother's bedtime stories. My father¹ shared stories of place whenever I rode along with him in his logging truck, and my grandfather would share stories of his life as we spent fall after fall hunting pine mushrooms together in the Nass, Kispiox, and Skeena River valleys (though often it was grandma who shared with us grandpa's more important stories). I listened to the short stories of Patrick McManus while riding in the car and listened to Tom King's *The Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour*² while weeding the garden (and later, on tape over and over while living in Russia pre-internet). I started telling stories quite young, and started writing stories around ten, with a lot of support from my family who did what they could to encourage me. I have continued writing regularly to this day, mostly short stories but also one short novel, with both stories and novel trying to share with people I cared about some sense of the worldview I had been raised with. Each time I found myself misunderstood or my perspective dismissed out of hand, it drove home just how valuable being understood was, and I would try and think of new ways to share or to make myself understood. Really, this need to have a voice that was not only heard but also understood was something that was made clear to me early in life, as I became aware of the in-between status of my existence.

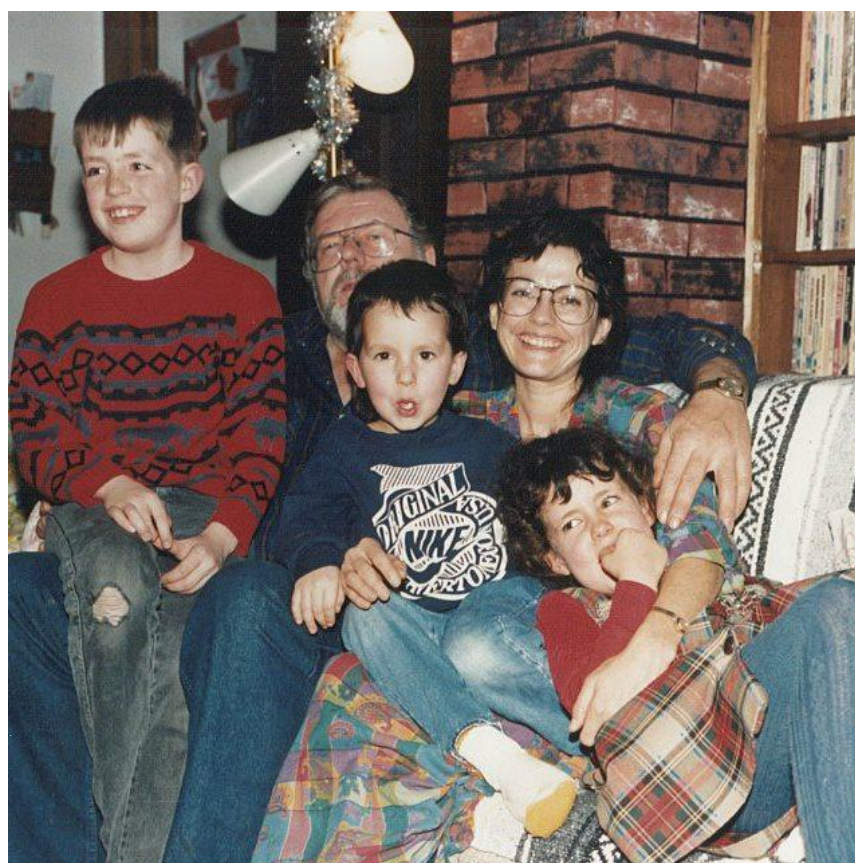
1.2.3 Developing a practice of introspection

I was raised in Two Mile, BC, in Gitksan Territory. Two Mile is roughly midway between the villages of Gitanmaax and New Hazelton. Approximately 90% of the population of the Hazeltons is either

¹ Throughout these stories I refer to family members as mother, father, grandma, or grandpa rather than use their real names. This is not done to protect their anonymity, but rather to reinforce the closeness of their relationships to me, and emphasize the impact that my experiences with them became a part of my core narratives of identity.

² "The Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour" was a show on CBC Radio One from 1997 till 2000, written by Tom King, and produced by Kathleen Flaherty. I don't remember which episode or which season this was, but I can remember all the Cree language phrases-of-the-week.

Gitksan or Wetsuwet'en, however my community of Two Mile was largely made up of four groups: Indigenous/non-Indigenous mixed marriages, Métis families who had moved there from the prairies, Seventh-Day Adventists, and a smattering of other long-time residents. This was my circle. As for me, my mother's family was Métis, my father's family Irish, and we were all Adventists as well. Whatever views I or my family held, there was always someone around me who did not share it, meaning very few of my assumptions could go un-interrogated. In contrast, it felt like most of my friends *did* have large groups of people who shared many or most of their assumptions, meaning if they weren't inclined to introspection, it wouldn't be forced on them.



Me (left) with my father Ike, mother Valerie, brother Adam, and sister Skylia

That questioning oneself was not something everyone did was driven home to me by an incident in my 20s. I had just returned from the big Métis gathering at Batoche, and had brought my baby brother

a Métis sash. We were in a fairly monocultural, central-Albertan town at the time, went out to a Tim Horton's wearing our sashes and some siwash sweaters, and a group of my brother's friends (from the Church we attended) asked him "jokingly" why he was joining the dark side. We were both shook a bit by the experience, my brother in particular, who suddenly realised what his mother and grandfather had faced far more regularly in life, and also realized that he valued that portion of his identity. For me it was more a realization that no matter how clear your stated values may be, those values don't really matter if you never have to weigh the practices of your life against them. As someone who looked on my family's values and worldview as central to my identity, trying to gain a sense of security in who I was meant doing the reflection to allow that worldview to be reflected in practice.

To understand what it meant to me to reflect that worldview, I drew on other stories. One story I was raised with was the parable of the talents – the story of three servants who choose to use or not use what they have been given for the service of others. Another story is one told to me a few times by Elder Norman Fleury, a story his grandmother shared with him about where we as Michif people came from.

In the beginning on the prairies there were the Saulteaux, the Assiniboine, the Cree, the Dakota, with all the nations forming a great circle. But when *Li Booñ Jeu* – the Creator – looked down, he saw there was a gap in that circle. So, he created a people to fill that gap – *li Naasyooñ di Michif*.

Both of these stories say something not just about what a value looks like when expressed, but also about the extent to which that value should be expressed; our beliefs aren't to be the recipients of token gestures, they are to define our life choices and our day-to-day actions. The story of the talents for me drives home that we all have multiple perspectives and skills that are useful, all of which are important. The story of completing the circle points to the purpose of these perspectives – using those unique experiences, stories and relationships to connect people together. When I look at both my family's history and the history of my nation, I see examples of this. Looking at the history of the Métis

Nation, I see a history of building connection, bridging linguistic and cultural divides, helping negotiate and then signing treaties, establishing many of the earliest friendship centers and the Native Counselling Centre, and by being involved at the ground level in coordinating political resistance to colonizing policies enacted by varying Provincial and Federal governments.

Looking at my family, I see how my mother found her way to connect people within the healthcare system. Being ‘our nurse’ – the only Indigenous nurse at the hospital – she helped people navigate a medical system that is often difficult to understand, helping people deal with the language barriers resulting from technical jargon and the temporary postings of medical professionals, something she has continued to do long after retirement.

This push to connect people and serve in some way comes from a lot more than just these two stories; it’s a lifetime of books read in the evening, comments of appreciation for the work of different individuals, and when my siblings and I showed an interest in learning something or serving, we were supported not just verbally but in other meaningful ways as well. My brother and sister both went to school to become teachers, while my own path to working with youth has been slightly less direct.

1.3 My journey to a focus on a holistic framework

Some of the people who get involved in language revitalization work do so because their culture is strong, their families embody who they want to become, and they grow up absorbing the knowledge and the values associated with it. They see what they have and want that for others. Many of my mentors have been in this group, at least by the end of their journeys.

Many others, in fact most of the dedicated language champions and language learners I have met, in the Métis Nation as well as in many other nations (including Nuxalk), have been pursuing these goals from a position of vulnerability, striving to build up others even as they work towards building

themselves. This includes young people who have grown up out of town and don't feel local when at their "home" communities. It includes young people who physically don't "look Native" and have faced racism or felt excluded at times from their own communities or even their own families. This also includes young people who feel that they are on the outside of many of the organized activities popular in their communities such as various sports, or who feel that their status as insiders is in question. I can put myself firmly in most of these categories, with the exception that I have always felt strongly connected to my own family.

Some of these language workers, myself included, have had to absorb their own culture through studying about it or listening to recordings. They might feel a lack of belonging that motivates them to spend real time diving in to things like studying obscure language resources, seeking out elders and learning from them, memorizing large amounts of information, or reading political writings from various First Nations authors. To give an example, I've met two other people (besides myself) who, while living in Victoria, got copies of oral history from the RBC Archives and listened to them over and over again as a way to deal with that dislocation or homesickness, both listening to the point where these recordings become foundational to their identity in some way.

These are not the only categories of language activist by any stretch, and I'm not asking you to try and fit yourself into one category or the other. I do want you to think about how, for most of these people, connecting people to culture and community is central, even as experiences and motivations give different strengths and perspectives. And I want you to understand that in the section that follows, I am telling, in part for myself, what motivated me as I began my pursuit of my own language.

1.3.1 Connecting with Grandpa

It wasn't until he passed away that I realized how big a part of my life my grandfather had been. I

remember so many days spent helping him, my small hands helping him stack apricots in his canning jars just the way they should be, or helping do firewood, or eventually, once I was about twelve years old, becoming his mushroom picking partner.

In the Hazeltons, picking pine mushrooms as a source of income began in the eighties, and probably peaked around 1994. I think it was 1992 when my grandfather and uncle made \$14,000 in a single day picking pines, and during the nineties, most of my relatives picked pine mushrooms from some time in August through into October, often quitting good jobs as fallers as they made more money picking pines. In some ways this was a form of resource extraction, following on the footsteps of trapping, logging, and gathering pinecones, and, being a cash industry that rewarded knowledge of the land, awareness and hard work, it became a major source of income for a significant portion of the population in the region. For my grandfather, mushroom picking in the fall was very important, and we prepared for it much the same way he had prepared for trapping; preparing buckets, servicing the truck, oiling our boots, and making plans.

As we hiked, or as we drove, we would talk, and he would share knowledge and stories; stories of encounters with animals, stories of Métis political organizers when he was young, and lots of stories of the landscapes we were picking in, knowledge of mental skills related to searching for animals or mushrooms, or of how to build a cabin with an axe. He would talk about the biplane he and his brother bought from Wop May (of Red Baron and Mad Trapper fame), and of paddling birchbark canoes from Wabasca to Yellowknife, going through communities where nobody spoke English or Cree. If I was really lucky he would tell me a little bit about his childhood, his mother leaving him when he was still very young, hunting for the family at five, and walking behind his dad on the traplines all winter, sleeping in the middle as dad and his older brother would fight over the single blanket they all shared. Many of the memories that were most important to him, such as his insecurities about being unable to write, or his

memories of his mother walking away from him for the last time, or his descriptions of the blood on the walls of the house he and his siblings squatted in after being abandoned were shared to me by grandma rather than grandpa, but they were still just as important to me, and helped me understand his at times grumpy demeanor in a very different way.

I remember one day when we lost each other. I charged up and down ridges and checked cliffs for what seemed like forever before I heard his stressed-out voice in the distance. I rushed over to help this old man with Parkinson's, only to hear how stressed out and worried he'd been that something might have happened to me! His stories became mine as he passed them down.

Even as I grew closer, the opposite was also happening. It was during these years of picking together that I really started to gain an awareness that my grandpa and I were not seen in the same way. Grandpa was a Cree-looking Métis man with a long ponytail, while despite my own long ponytail at the time I still remember how it felt to be asked "do you want to fight me, white boy?" by a guy who looked far more like my grandpa than I did. Each time I was made to feel like I didn't belong, it felt like my connection to my grandfather was being questioned and delegitimized, by people who weren't a part of my family, yet somehow had the right to decide who I was and wasn't. It was very unsettling as a teenager, and didn't get easier as I grew older.

1.3.2 Developing a broader identity

My grandfather would always greet us with the phrase "How's the halfbreed situation?" with the answer being "severe, very severe." One day he told us that this wasn't just his own saying, but it had been the rallying cry of a Métis politician in Northern Alberta back when grandpa had been a young man. My grandma was trying to help my grandpa reconnect with family members, and it was through her work that our family began the process of connecting with other Métis outside of our family and

beyond the immediate area. It was actually the same time that we started calling ourselves Métis, as until then we had largely used the term *halfbreed*. Looking back at this growing sense of connection, while I have loved the youth groups, the camps, the people I've met and the relationships I've established within the broader Métis community in the past twenty years, the defining memory of connecting was my grandpa crying after we told him that Métis funding was going to help pay my way to college. "It's the first time being a halfbreed has done any good for anyone in my family," he said.

1.3.3 Introduced to language

When I was around twelve years old, I realized that some of the words I had grown up with were not actually English, but Cree, or even French that had become a part of my family's Cree. I asked grandpa to teach me the language, but he told me he'd forgotten most of the language since moving away from Kinuso in the fifties. My grandma however had some books she gave me, and I started studying them constantly. I remember making my sister learn, my brother learn, and studying myself all the time. I remember working as faller's helper when my job just consisted of sitting in a snowbank listening to make sure an accident hadn't happened, freezing my hands or trying to use my mitts to turn the pages in a Cree phrasebook produced by Dr. Anne Anderson.³ It was frustratingly hard to make sense of, but I refused to quit, memorizing long complicated words without entirely knowing how to break them down.

As time went by the frustration increased, as all my work seemed to not be paying off, even as my desire to speak and feel that connection to the broader community increased for the reasons discussed above. Despite the challenges, my love for languages and their communities also increased,

³ Dr. Anne Anderson was a Cree speaking Métis woman from Prince Albert. She was an early and very important champion of the Cree language, writing over 100 books on the subject, of which my family had a handful. I remember that the one book I spent studying that day was a small one called *Let's learn Cree: Namoya ayiman* (1970).

making high school French and Spanish far easier subjects in comparison to the Cree I was struggling with.

1.3.4 College

Using the Métis funding my grandfather had found so wonderful I had been working on a degree in English Literature between years spent overseas teaching ESL. I don't think I could overstate the impact that degree had on me. A Canadian English degree is heavily focused on learning to understand others through their stories, and increasingly through our own stories. I was able to take Canadian and regional literature three separate times, each time focusing on different regions within Canada, as well as on First Nations literature, both regional and as a whole. Both the courses and the interactions with my classmates and teachers helped me develop a way of approaching people and their stories with the assumption that what was being shared was meaningful to that person. In addition to this, while we explored and used many different approaches to literary criticism, increasingly through my degree, my cohort focused more and more on what is called reader-response criticism – the legitimization of bringing personal experiences to bear on texts. While this approach can take many forms, at its heart is introspection and personal engagement, and for me it resulted in the writing of several short stories in which I felt I was able to both make sense of the world and effectively share my perspectives. With the development of these practices I felt like I finally was using both the tools to understand where people were coming from, as well as the tools to make myself understood. And the same resources that allowed me to express myself and understand others, also allowed me to begin understanding myself, grounding myself. In fact, in retrospect, the practices around engagement with story that I had developed during this time became in and of themselves one of the grounding pillars of my sense of who I was.

1.3.5 Facing darkness

Upon graduation I decided to take an internship with a development organization in Rwanda.

While there were many positives, such as gaining an awareness of best practices in development such as community involvement, meaningful consultation, and how to avoid the worst of the colonizing trends, there were also some negatives including what I later realized was a mixture of depression and a serious loss of confidence in some of my own abilities, a result of the inbuilt limitations of the role I was given combined with very little freedom connected to how I filled that role, along with a micromanaging boss. This situation combined with the death of my grandfather left me feeling like my legs had been taken out from under me.

At this point, I want to work back to the story I began telling at the very beginning, about needing to get away, travelling towards the mushroom patch. Upon leaving Rwanda, I had enrolled in the Master's program at the University of Victoria. It feels dishonest to argue that during the first few years of my Linguistics degree, I was dealing with depression and a sense of disconnection, especially when I remember all the friends I made and how much I loved the learning, even more so when I think of the fact that I finally was able to learn to speak one of my nation's languages, spending my first summer as a linguistics student in a mentor-apprentice program documenting and learning to speak Michif (something I will talk about later). One friend, however, fairly directly pointed out to me that even just saying that it feels dishonest is actually downplaying the situation, which is one of the reasons that men often don't deal with depression. I do realize that good times don't mean that bad times aren't also happening, but I can also say that by the time I was really focused on the work of writing my thesis, I was not in a good place. Despite my accomplishments, my sense of grounding was slipping away, and after months of zero progress, the only thing I could think of was going mushroom picking.

So far in this story I've taken the time to talk some about my sense of connection with my family, my growing connection to my community, as well as the various ways in which my upbringing and my education helped me develop practices and perspectives that helped me ground myself. This awareness

of connection and the practice of being present in the moment, as well as bringing memories to bear on the present moment, I view as being grounded. But as I travelled north towards the Yukon where I would be picking, I was having such a hard time staying grounded in what I was doing that I would pull over every half hour to play a game on my cellphone or read a few pages of a book.

Being as it wasn't the right time of year for picking pine mushrooms, I was instead going for fire morels, usually picked the year after a forest fire has swept through an area. By the end of my first week of picking morels, I already felt like a new person. Walking through the bush, my practice and training from years earlier came back to me and I was again able to remain focused on the present. My eyes carefully searched the terrain as my mind analyzed each patch of ground for the likelihood that morels might be growing there. I layered theories on top of hunches on top of conjectures about the significance of burn depth, water presence, tree type and soil type on the fruiting of the mycelium, and then did my best to use these models to guide my eyes as they analyzed each dip or bump of terrain, or each glimpse of relevant texture, colour, shape or shadow. I refined the search patterns I had been raised with, and deliberately applied them, hour after hour after hour, picking twelve to fourteen hours a day without ever needing to stop for a distraction. My ears stayed open for the sound of footsteps, my eyes remained on the lookout for the creators of the frequent bear and moose prints that covered the area, and my nose kept a lookout for the smell of mushrooms.

I slept like a log.

As I got more and more centered in what I was doing, I started to be able to drop into what my friends in the patch called a flow state; I remember one specific afternoon, stumbling across a hillside covered in morels, and while I had been literally stumbling before, catching my shirt on every burnt snag and badly needing some water, within a minute I was now walking smoothly through dense brush, my

razor blade flicking back and forth millimetres from my fingertips, never nicking them. I could now hold twenty to thirty mushrooms in a hand rather than the normal nine or ten, pain was gone and I picked a full pail in fifteen minutes instead of three or four hours. Over ten years later, and I can still remember the feel of the wet ash on my fingers, the slope of the hill, where I was picking in relation to my friends, and a sense of even the locations and angles of specific burnt spruce trees that I wove my body through. In talking with mushroom pickers who spent the other 10 months of the year rock climbing at a high level, more than one talked about how during those special times when things just came together while picking, the sense of being fully focused and engaged in the moment was even stronger than the level of focus they felt while free soloing – rock climbing without protective gear where a mistake would mean death. They told me that this was called “flow”, a state of mind that I now have learnt actually has a body of research attached to it.⁴ For me, this felt like a gift I had been given, a capstone moment (or rather many of them) which tied together my learning, helping me turn the practice of a few weeks into a foundational memory that has left me trying to provide similar experiences to students in the years since, finding ways to allow their knowledge to come together in ways that are as fully engaging as possible, both emotionally and physically.

As the season ended in the southern Yukon, I met up with some new friends and ended up picking about a hundred km north of Lake Laberge, having gotten there by boat. In brief I almost drowned, spent a week alone, negotiated wolves and moose, built a log cabin using the directions grandpa had shared in his stories, sat on top of a mountain eating the last of the dried apples he had made for me before his death, and eventually built a raft and travelled the river over a hundred kilometres north to Carmacks before hitchhiking back south. It felt like closure, both for my journey with

⁴ See Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2005, and Jackson & Eklund, 2002.

my grandfather and for my recovery from feeling powerless and undirected. At the end of six weeks I drove home without needing to take a single break. I had lost 40 lbs despite eating almost constantly, and what had initially looked like mountains now looked like hills. Over the next month I was able to finish my thesis, working on it daily for up to 8 hours at a stretch while remaining focused.



Myself up in a burn along the Yukon River not too far from Carmacks.

As my mind relived the summer, depending on the day it could be a narrative of recovery from an internet addiction, a story of dealing with the loss of my grandfather, an adventure story about regaining my self-confidence, or a tale about the importance of nature. The experience led to a whole series of stories, stories which became tools for managing a wide range of new challenges. Regardless of the situation, I felt grounded again.

I realized that my response to this level of engagement with my environment was not unique to me both through visiting with other pickers around their fires, but also the next summer when my mother came with me. This time it was her turn to heal. She had just been diagnosed with a terminal, progressive auto-immune disorder, and was spending much of her time lost in the future, thinking of those patients she had held as they faced the future she now saw coming. She spent one week with me picking morels from dawn till dusk, thinking of nothing except the next step, the next mushroom, the next hill, and how nice bed would feel. After spending months unable to escape her worries of the future, following our week together my mother was so firmly grounded in the present that to the best of my knowledge she has never since fallen back in to fear.



This is the only picture I have of my mother during the week she was able to let go of her fears

These practices and events were life changing for me. Not only did they give me well-being at a time when I desperately needed it, and re-ignite my passion for hunting wild food, but they also started me on a search to understand how and why these experiences could be so impactful. I read books on

survival, books on tracking, and stories of peoples' experiences in the wilderness. I regularly spent time engaging in activities that grounded me in practice, and I tried to bring the level of attentiveness that came so natural in the bush into the rest of my life, trying to pay better attention to my friends, and be more present in discussions and in my classroom.

1.4 Taking the patch home with me

While almost every book or shared experience had meaningful things to contribute to the discussion of being present, one page in particular stood out to me – a short list of the “qualities of a good tracker” in the *SAS Guide to Tracking*. “To be a competent tracker you must develop the following qualities: patience, an inquisitive mind, honesty, perseverance, acute observation, ... curiosity” (Carss & Birch, 2009) all of which the book justified in detail. Behaviours that in other contexts might be described as ethical, moral or philosophical considerations were here seen as skills or tools that emerged from pursuing excellence in an involved practice. My favourite quote regarding grounding one's practice in presence or awareness comes from the conclusion of Terry Grant and Nadine Robinson's book *Mantracker: The ultimate guide to tracking man or beast* (2012). Terry writes “...this is more than a tracking book... Tracking is a way of life that encourages caring about the world and the people around you – and paying attention to them. It's about living fully, being present...” (p. 199).

This and other tracking and survival textbooks contrast life-saving humility and awareness with the deadly results of pride leading capable individuals to ignore context. This contrast of perspectives directly parallels Thomas King's contrast between an Indigenous worldview learning from stories, and a settler approach that King exemplifies with a story of Alexander the Great – who when confronted with the famous Gordian Knot, rather than attempting to understand it, simply 'solved' the problem by slashing it with his sword.

I saw these competing worldviews of embracing context or cutting through it in one of the broad divisions within the field of linguistic studies. In a paper I wrote on the socio-linguistic context in language revitalization, I contrasted “[Noam] Chomsky’s view of language as an internal manifestation of the individual Cartesian mind, and [Dell] Hymes’ view of language as a social phenomenon acquired through social interaction” (McCreery, unpublished, 2014). I went on to say:

Since the question of research agenda and methodology is inseparable from the question of the nature of language, this conflict has had serious implications. If “true” language, the “base-line” of acquisition/communication, is a function of the mind and can be teased apart by eliminating all context, then clinical study in a controlled environment is key. This has led to the structured ESL classroom being the center of a large body of SLA research. If on the other hand, in the words of Larsen-Freeman (2007) language is “a structured network of dynamic language-using patterns, stored in memory”, memories which include a vast amount of context, then the proper approach to language’s study is in the very context that is it and created it, social interaction.

A large part of language documentation has been done within or been heavily influenced by the Chomskyan paradigm, seeking to discover and preserve the patterns and clues hidden in languages regarding the functioning of the human mind, in sort of an updated type of salvage anthropology⁵. And the fact that I can compare it to salvage anthropology for me is evidence that this is not a problem that can be laid at Chomsky’s feet, rather the idea of accessing truth through the elimination of context, a reductionist approach, is an idea that has a long pedigree within western thought.

Jacqueline Rahm’s 2014 thesis *Deconstructing the Western Worldview: Toward the Repatriation*

⁵ an approach to anthropology that assumed that all Indigenous cultures were on the verge of disappearing, therefore culture and language needed to be collected as cultural artifacts rather than as practices. For a book on this approach, see *Prophets and Ghosts: the story of salvage anthropology* (Redman, 2021).

and Indigenization of Wellness is a wonderful tracing of this history through western history, also outlining alternative epistemologies from within western thought that predate this privileged perspective, and which she argues “is far more similar to Indigenous worldviews than it is to the western paradigm today” (Rahm, v). She makes her opinions on the subject quite clear in her abstract:

An imbalanced and privileged worldview not only justified an unacknowledged genocide in world history, it is characteristic of a psycho-spiritual disease that plays out across our global society. This dissertation suggests that the healing of the western mind rests with shifting the dominant paradigm toward a fundamental axiom of holism found within the life-ways of American Indigenous peoples and also buried within the West’s own ancestry.... (ibid).

Based on my own reading of the history of European philosophy and history I see this conflict as an ongoing one, with constant push back against this dominant narrative as evident by the writings associated with religious and cultural counter movements throughout history and literature of Europe, as well as through the very real impact of Indigenous thought on European intellectual debate over the past few centuries (Graeber & Wendgrow, 2021). These conflicting perspectives have remained present in aspects of religious and social movements such as the one I grew up in, as well as in the lives of aboriginal people and the communities and individuals that meaningfully engage with decolonization and reclamation.

1.4.1 Applying holism to revitalization

In the past few sections, I’ve shared the progression of my worldview from one that had a holistic or non-reductionist foundation to one in which the implementation of the foundation was deliberate and conscious, then explored how the questions posed related to my studies as a linguistics grad student. The reality is that a way of knowing that grounds itself in connection to everything, a

holistic epistemology, by its very nature can be realized and applied in almost any context, and the expression of this philosophy can be traced across a vast number of different communities, activities, and bodies of political, social, environmental, and religious thought, as I briefly touched on above. The same is true of the opposing viewpoint; for better or for worse these reductionist or isolating tendencies have been writ large across political systems, legal frameworks, colonial endeavors, and religious systems, as well as underpinning philosophies of the mind, approaches to psychology, or models of well-being. I also believe that writers like Rahm are largely correct to suggest a connection between indigeneity and holism, both because Indigenous groups have been the recent targets of enforced categorization, and because most of these Indigenous groups have lived lives that are less insulated from the practice of engaging with reality than are cultures built upon financial systems that license the abstraction of every aspect of reality into dollars and cents, while making a morality out of using each plot of ground, and each moment of time to realise maximum return on investment within this framework.

Using a reductionist epistemology rather than a holistic one has had profound influences on education. Viewing education as the accumulation of knowledge, and viewing knowledge as discrete data points, has led to testing methods that encourage memorization. It has encouraged the divorce of knowledge from application, and in the field of language education has prioritized commodification of linguistic knowledge over the relationships built through its use. While around the world educational systems, especially in the lower levels, have been rejecting these methods in favour of learning through practice, through hands-on experiences, or through integrated methods, with assessments based on practice rather than regurgitation, the expectations created by this epistemology still have a significant impact on teaching and assessment, especially at the university level. To give one especially ironic example, a friend was taking a course on K-12 assessment methods, and when she asked the instructor

why none of the suggested “best practices” were being used in the course itself, she was told that it was because they were all capable adults: that is, all alternative methods were viewed as accommodations for deficits rather than being actual best practices, with “truth” still understood to be received tradition.

In a similar vein, such reductionist tendencies, whether a manifestation of western educational practices, Chomskyan linguistics, or academic objectivity, have had a profound impact on linguistic work with Indigenous languages, be it language documentation or the production of language teaching materials. One of my hobbies has been collecting language textbooks. Many of them are incredibly propaganda heavy, for example a phrasebook for Russian soldiers operating in Latvia, which gives the question *where is the mayor?* with the three possible answers being *a) shot, b) captured, or c) escaped*.⁶ Another good example is the bilingual Cree-English textbook used in an Alberta residential school, where kids copy out a letter home telling their parents that when they grow up they are going to work hard, and not wear blankets like an Indian. Looking specifically at language resources for Canadian First Nations languages, with examples spanning more than a century, there has been a reliance on grammars filled with charts that pull verbs out of context, on dictionaries that pluck root words entirely out of context, often to the point where it is impossible to deduce how the word is appropriately used, and on teaching resources that are list heavy, exercise heavy, but with few examples of use. The books do seem to be built on the premise that language is the result of algorithms applied to semantic integers.

Looking at broader types of language resources, texts have often been carefully recorded, often by the anthropologists of the past, but for many languages, there may be no documentation whatsoever

⁶ When my friend, a former Russian soldier who had served in Latvia, first showed his copy of this book to me, we both had a good laugh. Unfortunately I cannot provide a citation as they were military issue, and I never obtained my own copy or wrote down the title. Twenty years later, in the midst of Russia’s full scale invasion of Ukraine, where local government is being treated as combatants, teachers in the temporarily occupied territories are being fired or arrested for speaking Ukrainian and children are being sent to re-education camps where they face punishment for speaking their language, the joke doesn’t seem quite so funny any more.

of dad and uncle chatting while working on something, or grandma and her daughters visiting over tea. This means that even out of thousands of pages of documentation, there may be no actual examples of simple questions, of a person talking on behalf of a group, or of a disagreement or discussion – situations that are integral to living with a language, but irrelevant to scooping up the lexicons necessary for historical linguistic research, or the structures needed to compare typology or make assumptions about the workings of the mind.

Many of these languages have incredibly rich pronominal morphology, with complex portmanteau affixes for a wide variety of different contexts, and while you can find the examples in the chart at the back of the book, In the two languages I've worked with the most, Nuxalk and Michif, if you go through all the texts and conversations that have been transcribed, many of the most basic suffixes are entirely absent in the texts available. All of the linguistic endeavors that do get properly taken care of such as the dictionaries and grammars and texts are indeed important, well done, and made concise for good reason, but the underlying perspective does not give effective or sufficient direction to guide documentation or the production of materials to support the work of pursuing belonging, community, healing, well-being, or indigeneity through linguistic reclamation and resurgence. As you might have guessed, a portion of this dissertation will be focused on what such materials might look like.

1.5 Broadening my practice

The last part of my journey (to date), both in terms of developing an understanding of holism applied at the community level and in terms of fully contextualizing my research and included materials, begins in 2009. It was then that I received a phone call asking me if I was available to go to Klemtu and assist in some language documentation work that was being done. I had just spent the fall with my parents after having spent another summer as a language apprentice under Grace Zoldy in Camperville, and my name had been passed on to Klemtu as someone who had some experience and might be free. I

was very excited and as soon as my jury duty finished I caught the ferry and spent several months working with Violet Neasloss building a body of language documentation and recordings for her community. Working with Michif, my friend Heather Souter had introduced me to a range of documentation practices that treated the language like a living corpus, with methods that focused on documenting the full range of use rather than just meaning + syntax, and as a result my documentation practices now created recordings that could be far more useful for language learners. Working on Sgüüxs with Violet and with Angel Edgar I was able to build on those methods and do what I felt was a few steps better than my previous work. Violet was in her mid-nineties, and had been the only speaker remaining for some time, so the challenges were quite a bit different from what I had faced with Michif, and I learnt a lot and am still quite happy with what I and my co-worker Angel Edgar accomplished, with some 400 hours of recordings made and a significant portion of them transcribed so we could check for more things in need of being recorded. While I had always taken a “record everything and sort out individual things later” approach to documenting, at this point, working with a woman who was at present the only fluent speaker of a language, I really embraced the concept, I realized that I was not a super-linguist who could ask all the right questions and tease apart every complicated structure with ease. Because of this, I would have to focus on creating the *richest* recordings possible, trying to initiate as many different types of conversations as possible, and on exploring as many contexts as possible with the very limited time we would have. There’s very little like realizing that this is your only chance to get something right, in fact a community’s only chance to get something right, to really motivate a person to think about how to do their best, and in accepting this position I had accepted a responsibility that weighed on me.

Some time in the middle of my time there, Deborah Nelson and Clyde Tallio came to Klemtu from Bella Coola, and we were able to have a good visit and review the work I had been doing, after which Clyde told me that at some point they would be ready to have me come and do the same work

with Nuxalk. A couple years later I got the invitation.

I once heard someone say that the difference between truly listening to someone and loving them is so small as to be inconsequential, and my work in Bella Coola, as it had been in Klemtu and in Camperville, was listening to people. It should go without saying that helping a person access their memories of their language, bringing up memories of their grandparents, their childhood, their most treasured memories, is not something that can be done without listening very actively. I remember regularly taking naps after just a couple hours of recording. Doing this for hundreds of hours, I began to care for them very deeply, to where I really do feel like with the passing of these elders over the past few years I've lost some of the best friends I will ever have. In much the same way that my relationship with my grandfather shaped my goals and my perception of myself, I now viewed my language work in the context of my relationship with these elders.

Understanding my work in the context of these relationships has implications and consequences. I remember elder Norman Fleury telling me “Dale, I’m okay with sharing this with you, since I know that you are going to do something with it.” Upon reflection I realized that at the heart of his statement was a perspective on knowledge that refused to objectify it – knowledge was shared with an expectation that that knowledge would continue to be valued and understood in the context of its pre-existing relationships, or at a minimum at least some kind of relationship.⁷ In the case of stories, this to me has meant a refusal to reduce narratives to connected facts, and instead embrace their role as builders of community, relationships, and as vehicles of culture, knowledge transmission and teaching. In the case

⁷ Wesley Leonard puts it this way: “When speaker-consultants participate in language documentation, for instance, it is their understanding of ‘language’ that informs their motivations in doing such work” (2017, p. 19). Leonard speaks of resituating language work within the worldview and epistemology of its own language community as *language reclamation*. This fits into a broader view of Indigenous resurgence, and I have generally used the term resurgence to include this idea.

of linguistic knowledge, it has meant recognizing the role of language as a vehicle for identity and culture, and to both approach the learning and documenting of language with those aspects always in mind. It has also meant accepting that the gift of time on the part of my teachers was not done in exchange for whatever funding we had, but rather done out of a love of their language that I have accepted as well, accepting along with that love their understanding of the importance of passing on that knowledge.

Many statements and probing questions from almost every different elder I have worked with over the years have reinforced my understanding that when knowledge is shared with me, I have been entrusted with a set of responsibilities connected to that knowledge, responsibilities that can vary depending on the community and the elder, but responsibilities which are never extractive and are always subjective. In particular, I am grateful to Michif elder Norman Fleury, Sgüüxs elder Violet Neasloss, and Nuxalk elders Arthur Pootlass and Amos Tallio for the clarity with which they questioned my purpose in doing language work, helping me understand and live up to the role they were gifting me with, and am equally grateful to Michif elders Grace Zoldy and Verna Dimontigny, and Nuxalk elders Beatrice Elliot and Godfrey Tallio for their willingness to simply assume my intentions were in line with the work we were undertaking together (although they still shared enough of how they saw the work for me to understand what my intentions should be).

When I said that I had accepted responsibilities along with what I had been taught, with Michif, it was at times hard to live up to this. I could find isolated individuals here and there to share the language with, I could help make materials, or even help with language camps, but because of the challenges created by our diaspora, I have never been able to use my Michif language in the way I hope to someday. But after a year of doing language documentation in Bella Coola, I began teaching at Acwsalcta school as well as documenting, and here the situation was different. It takes time to get to

know a community, to get to know the back stories of those you work with and the families of your students, but I had a lot of help. The other language teachers would help me over and over remember who all the kids were, and Clyde Tallio would make me memorize the names and stories of different lineages, telling me to “remember them with your heart” each time I begged him to let me record and memorize later. Being Michif and not Nuxalk presented other challenges which my friends helped me with in various ways. I was adopted into the Snuxyaltwa family by my new brother Peter Snow, and in potlatch after potlatch he would help me learn people’s names and families. In addition, I worked hard to maintain my other cloaks, so to speak, remaining a mushroom picker (also important in Bella Coola), and working hard to maintain good relationships with the families of the elders I was working with or had worked with.

The end result was a situation that was new to me – the relationships that surrounded my language work were no longer just with elders, they were now also with my students, my co-workers, my family members, and with the community as a whole. And my goals with my work were not only adapting to reflect the challenges faced by my students (challenges that were quite different from my previous ESL students in Russia and Korea), but were also adapting to reflect the goals of my community as a whole, goals that had to be understood within my community’s frame of reference.

1.6 Determining community goals

While there are a lot of approaches to determining a community’s goals including public consultations and gatherings of concerned individuals, one way to make these goals clear is to look at the purpose and goals of the stories that we feel are important. There’s a series of stories or shared *smayusta* (origin stories) we tell to students at Acwsalcta when the occasion arises that as a group are called *the four catastrophes*. These stories (along with some even earlier stories that frame a relationship to the creator and the land) are understood to be a part of the foundation of all the *smayusta* that follow

within students' own families. The series begins with the falling of the sky, during which the builders of the sky learn to acknowledge and correct their mistakes. This is followed by the burning of the world, the results of pride and an inability to deal with difficult situations. Stories of famines describe the challenges of a society before the strongly interconnected potlatch world that replaced it, and how nonvalidated power led to abuses. Stories of the flood tend to be examples of people helping each other to survive a world-changing catastrophe. All of these stories contain not only examples of resilience but also lessons learnt that made the survivors better able to maintain the well-being of their community, both in their day-to-day existence and in the face of new catastrophes.

In talking with the other language and culture staff as well as community members and leaders about what stories would be appropriate for the various ages of learners, the deciding factors are not questions of what would be the most entertaining, but rather questions of what characteristics and abilities are needed by our students at the various stages of their lives in order for them to *tamstl'cw*, to be making proper choices, so that they can *astl'cw*, to embody those proper choices and ways of being. For my youngest students, we focus on raven stories, giving examples of what happens when you ignore the feelings or existence of others, even if you think you're acting smart. Later on, there are *Sniniq'* or sasquatch stories which often provide examples for people to show what being human is actually supposed to be like. Following this there are a host of other stories which almost always deal with things like young people learning to recognize their shortcomings regarding their community, people healing from various traumas, or the results of good/bad decisions. In other words, pursuing wellness or well-being for their community.

Moving on to more recent stories, one book that all our high school students read is *Bella Coola man: More stories of Clayton Mack* (Mack, 1994), a collection of stories and experiences that one of our elders, Clayton Mack, felt needed to be passed down to the community. Many of his stories about his

own experiences are filled with incredibly open self-reflection and easy criticism of his own thought processes that led him to various situations, inviting listeners to share and process their own experiences in a similar way. While this is more a subject dealt with in chapter 4, this type of reflection, processing, and humility is central to passing on the abilities to become a person who is able to learn, connect with others, and pursue well-being effectively, and the extremely deliberate use of these mechanisms suggests that the entire genre of practice is part of pursuing well-being.

Looking at these examples, while I might be cherry-picking slightly in order to make my point more clearly, I don't see how I could engage with this body of narrative in a meaningful way and not come to the conclusion that the goal of this community was pursuing well-being.

When it comes to conceptualizing the pursuit of well-being, I can again both draw on available models, as well as look at my community's explicit use of story and storytelling. Useful models can be found in the work of Indigenous researchers such as Onowa McIvor, Edōsdi (Judith Thompson) and others. Health can be understood wholistically (McIvor et al., 2009) as including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness, while wellness (which I equate with well-being) can be understood as finding a balance between the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of life (Edōsdi, 2012), with healing being the restoring of that balance (ibid.). So pursuing well-being can be understood as working towards a goal of restored, balanced relationships with various components of life and identity. When I want to understand this pursuit within my local community's frame of reference, however, I have to return to my community's stories.

1.6.1 A smayusta understand of well-being

Many of my new friends and co-workers frequently referred to two books, *The Bella Coola Indians* volumes 1 and 2, written in the 1920s by Thomas McIlwraith, working with their grandparents

and great-grandparents. I too began to read and reread the book, learning the stories, while also listening to many of the stories told in Nuxalk on old recordings, or told to me by Snxakila, Clyde Tallio, who I particularly want to credit for shaping my understanding of the narrative underpinnings of my community's understanding of well-being. When I questioned whether or not I should include a description of smayusta and associated concepts, Tallio responded that because of the work I was doing, I *had to* be clear about the framework within which my work was done, and this meant including at least what I have shared here and in the introduction to section 5.1.

In Nuxalk there's a little word *sm*. It's used to emphasize something, as in *sm* *xlhalhh-ts*, 'I'm really hungry'. We add in *sm* to make the event even more real, to push it into the consciousness of the person we are talking to. We make things real to each other by telling stories, *sma* or *smsma*, especially the most important stories we possess, *smayusta* (and yes, any connection between these words is likely just a folk etymology, but then folk etymologies are often philosophically motivated). These *smayusta* are the stories displayed on the faces of our houses and on our regalia, and can be translated as the stories we display or are in charge of sharing, each family doing its part to share its portion of the whole culture and stories through its own potlatching. In many ways, these are the stories that structure society. To understanding how important these stories are, it's worth learning some more Nuxalk words.

In Nuxalk, one word for being rich is *kulhtaala*. It's a new word, representing a new way of thinking about wealth that was coming in to our world. It includes the word *taala* in it, money, and while it may represent a serious goal in our world today and a certain conceptualization of richness, it really does not represent the goals of a Nuxalk life, either today or in the past. In Nuxalk, the word for this goal, for being successful in life or self-sufficient, is *stl'mstaliwa* – which means to become fully able to be *t'l'msta*, human, having the resource base, stories, treasures, teachings, and relationships that allow each generation to dream good dreams, make them real, and let the following generation do the same. In

other words, a conceptualization of well-being.

To show how this relates to *smayusta*, it is good to understand some other Nuxalk words and their history. In the beginning of time the first ancestors lived in the world above, *nusmata*, the house of *sma*, stories. Things didn't change there that much, and although they lived forever, they couldn't change things or enact goals. *Tl'm*, the root word of *tl'msta*, can mean to have vision or goals for the future. *Tl'msta* is a tool or instrument for having goals or vision for the future, or in other words, a human. These first ancestors were given the chance to leave *nusmata*, to come to earth where they could change things, and they jumped at the chance. They became *stl'mstanalus*, fully human or mortal.

The shape of a story that follows is not any one family's story, as this would neither give the full context I am trying to share here nor be appropriate to share here, but what I am about to say does give an outline. Landing in our world, the first ancestors immediately began accumulating what they needed to make it possible for them to realize their potential as *tl'msta* (humans). With their *klhalhta*, the treasures they had brought with them from the world above, they travelled and gained more knowledge and social connections, usually including a spouse. They then picked a *tcamatlhh* - location to settle in, and a place to *ksnm-ak* (to work) that was called a *ksnm-sta*, a harvesting territory.

All of this work was done in preparation for what came next; children were born, and in order to smooth the way of their children as they started down their own paths to becoming *tl'msta*, the first ancestors would hold a potlatch.

At this potlatch, steps were taken to guarantee all the resources needed for those children and all future generations (*putl'lt*) to become *stl'mstaliwa*. First, guests were invited from far away to come and accept food and gifts drawn from the *ksnmsta*, and validate that family's presence on their chosen location and stewardship of their *ksnmsta* or territory by accepting the food and gifts. This continues to

be our legal basis for our stewardship of our territory. Secondly, guests validated the importance of the experience of those ancestors, by being witness to a telling of these stories, as well as validating names to be used by those ancestors in order to keep those stories, that education, constantly in the minds of the family. These potlatches also were often accompanied by marriages or plans of marriages designed to guarantee access to resources and education, ensuring that the children's children would also be *stl'mstaliwa*, self-sufficient enough to make plans for the future and realize them.

This story of how a family was started, why a family was started and with what goals, and what resources a family had (both material and educational) is a *smayusta*, and it is this story that gets retold at future potlatches, and re-emphasized through the giving of names to those who we wish to also be *stl'mstaliwa* so they too can be *tl'msta*, benefiting from the resources, social connections and cultural wealth of that lineage.

People of these *smayusta*, who are connected by these stories, are called *smatmc*, interpreted today as people of the story. This is used to mean both relatives (sharing a *smayusta*) and friends (sharing other experiences and stories). *smayusta* are tools that validate our stewardship of land and resources, are tools that give us our cultural identity, our education and guarantee us a future as a people able to use our resources and culture to make meaningful lives, making our children *tl'msta* who are *stl'mstaliwa*. When we have as a community the goal of all members being *stl'mstaliwa*, we have several things worth noting. First, everything from a person's profession to their marriage, their land, their name and their stories become grounded and made meaningful through relationships, both local and with other communities. Each person's life is a web of responsibilities, responsibilities to uphold the reality of every social contract they have become witness to. In particular, especially for this present discussion, these stories give a clear view of well-being, showing how well-being comes from having agency (being mortal, *tl'mstanalus*), vision (being *tl'msta*), having the tools and capacity to carry it out

(being *stl'mstaliwa*), with mechanisms in place (educational systems and potlatching practices) to perpetuate these capacities for *putl'lt* (future generations), with the longevity of the system guaranteed through the stability inherent in having all of these resources guaranteed by literally everybody near and far who might be able to come to a *lhlm* (potlatch).

Within this context, potlatching, both for hosts sharing these treasures and stories and for guests reaffirming these relationships, is a ceremony of relatedness that codifies into living law the interconnections between people, connections that make up our social reality and sense of connection to our experience of life, both where we live, who we live with, and the journeys that we are a part of during each moment. Potlatching, through the *smayusta* that are shared, furthermore establishes land and resources as being primarily understood through this lens of social responsibilities and relationships, and encourages the viewing of all these relationships as having been established in the past (through *smayusta*) for the good of future generations. A person who is *stl'mstaliwa*, a person you can describe as being in possession of well-being, is grounded in the history and stories of their community, connected to the land and resources of their family, takes part in the practices that ensure this (education, potlatching) and plays a role in perpetuating the balanced system of relationships. Their agency within this network of resources and teachings lets them pursue balance and well-being. A person who is educated in how these stories connect to the social realities they create is *asmayuustn*, which for me has a literal translation something like someone who carries the *smayusta* or is dressed in the *smayusta*, for me implying that it has become a part of the person and their identity.

1.6.2 My summarized goals

I have a definite understanding of what I want for my own children as they grow: I want them to be empathetic people, with an understanding of the needs and motivations of others that comes from a practice of thoughtfulness and engagement with peers and mentors. I hope that their thoughtfulness

will extend to nature, that they are able to be fully present in the moment, while bringing to bear all of their experiences to the challenges of each new day with honesty and openness to others. I hope that they will be, in the words of Ellen White, “thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought” (White, 1903, p. 11). I want them to be storytellers, and good listeners, and I want them to be wealthy in friends and family, secure in their identities, however complex and contested they might be. I want them to know the stories that are important to our family, and to know how to make their own, and I want them to be able to pass this on. In many ways, I want for them what I understand my broader community wants for all of our youth. Both of these visions are images of well-being, and my goal in the remainder of this thesis is to pursue and share a deeper understanding of what pursuing these goals can look like in the context of language revitalization.

2. Language and well-being

2.1 Introduction

As I finished my introductory chapter, I presented a model of well-being that saw a healthy individual, competent and capable, making meaningful decisions within the grounding of a well-constructed web of relationships that grounded them in community, place, resources, a shared history and shared vision of the future. This combination of a grounded individual who is also exercising their agency will be at the heart of much of the remainder of this thesis. In this chapter I want to look at how language interacts with this vision of well-being. To do this, I will first provide a broader outline of the history of aboriginal language use and well-being. I then follow this by sharing a useful way to understand the construction and function of identity, a model I will use to show how this specific history of language loss has contributed to poor well-being and health outcomes, largely through negatively impacting both agency and grounding. I will conclude this chapter by showing some specific ways through which communities and programs have worked towards healing these traumas, often through promoting the growth of agency within growing networks of grounding relationships with place, people, and healthy practices.

2. 1.1 Is there a connection between language and well-being?

Language is connected to health and well-being. Well-being is harmed by language loss. Healing language loss gives hope, and it gives health. For many of us involved in language revitalization, these connections are assumed starting points, beliefs that drive hundreds of passionate teachers and linguists to do the work they do. Going through literature written specifically about language revitalization, these underlying motivations have historically been bypassed as we focus directly onto pedagogical methods and challenges. Language is often simply assumed to be connected to well-being. But is it?

Connections between language and the collection of domains that make up well-being have been claimed by a range of organizations such as the World Health Organization (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003), the Inuit health organization Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (2014), and the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (Reading and Wien, 2009) all of which list language as an important social determinant of health. Connections between language and health (often defined holistically) have been documented as well. A foundational paper is Hallet et al. (2007) *Aboriginal language knowledge and youth suicide*. The authors' five-year study on youth suicide in First Nations communities revealed that out of communities with high language use (measured as a majority of the population) only one had even a single suicide over the five-year period. Out of communities with no language use, and no efforts being made to change this, suicide rates were many times higher than the national average. Discussion of this study (McIvor & Napoleon, 2009; Oster et al., 2014; Turner, 2015) has focused on the connection between language and the other protective factors, pointing out that rather than being measures of cultural continuity, as was initially argued by Hallet, Chandler & Lalonde (2007), these factors are best seen as measures of local political control, community autonomy, or as measures of community expressions of agency.

Another paper presenting primary research on the connection between language use and community health is 'Cultural continuity, traditional Indigenous language, and diabetes in Alberta First Nations: A mixed methods study' (Oster et al., 2014). The paper presents the views of Alberta elders that "traditional culture and language [are] one and the same" (ibid., p. 3). In their view, language is what connects them to their land, their location, their seasonal activities, governance, education, and daily conduct, and it is what takes all of these 'separate' domains and makes them into a completed circle, a full Indigenous life. The paper also describes language as being the glue of a collective identity – one that gives them a local sense of belonging to a collective, unlike what they perceive as being the results

of the broader individualistic identity. As regards diabetes, language was seen to connect people to the broader Aboriginal lifestyle – a lifestyle that included more physical activity, less processed foods, and better mental health.

In their quantitative analyses of diabetes as connected to a range of risk factors including median household income, unemployment rate, high-school completion rate, and finally, Indigenous language knowledge rate, the authors found that language knowledge rate was *the only factor* that was a “significant predictor of diabetes in a simple linear regression” (ibid., p. 8). In a similar pattern to Hallet, Chandler and Lalonde’s paper looking at suicide amongst BC Indigenous youth, Oster et al. found that diabetes rates went from much higher than the provincial average (three or more times higher) to much lower (also three or more times lower), and that this correlated to language knowledge quite predictively, even as other factors showed less significant correlations. Based on this research supporting a connection between Indigenous language use and health, McIvor et al. (2009, p. 21) call on government to support language and culture for the “tremendous effect and potential they hold for the renewed and continued wholistic health of Indigenous peoples.”

Suicide and diabetes are just two symptoms of a breakdown of well-being, but both have strong connections to a person’s care for themselves, often a complicated outgrowth of unbalances in several different domains of well-being. In light of this, these studies do seem to establish that there is a real connection between language use and well-being.

2.1.2 What is this “language” of which you speak?

In the above studies, when people talk about language, what do they actually mean? I’ve sidestepped this question up till now and deliberately not been specific. In part, this is because throughout this thesis you will be encountering narratives of language that are in conflict with each

other, and in fact, as I will discuss later on, the above studies connecting language to health might simultaneously be conflating the impacts of several different understandings of what language is. The understanding of language I will share here then will not be the only one you encounter, but it is the one that I personally find of most value and it will be a starting point for further explorations of meaning.

Within the field of linguistics there are currently multiple views on what constitutes language, part of an ongoing debate since at least the 1960s, with philosophical roots going back much further. This is a contrast I have researched previously, in my paper “Socio-Linguistic Context in Language Revitalization: A Review” (McCreery, 2014). On the one side is the view that language is the internal manifestation of the individual Cartesian mind. This view tends to be reductionist, leading to a strong clinical tradition of linguistic research that has given us a lot of understanding about the inner workings of the mind, but very little in terms of pedagogy that works for most learners. On the second side is the view that language is a social phenomenon, acquired through social interaction. As I quoted previously, language is “a structured network of dynamic language-using patterns, stored in memory” (Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 783), memories that include a vast amount of contextual data. This has led to in situ case studies of language use and learning, and also to many of the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) methods used today. This second perspective also seems to recognize that the ways in which this knowledge is manifested in speech and communication are also a part of what “language” is, that is, it is useful to include the practice of language in a conceptualization of language for the purpose of doing meaningful research on its manifestation.

This inclusion of practice and use of language into the concept of language seems especially useful in the context of language revitalization, where communities are explicitly working towards not just the restoration of a body of knowledge, but also the application of that knowledge to a healthy expression of indigeneity. Given that much of knowledge is an outgrowth of practice, insights into the

state of knowledge can also be made through an observation of the practice of acquisition and experiences connected to language rather than through a questionnaire regarding remembered or reproducible facts. This perspective is also a view conveyed by the words referring to language in several First Nations languages: in Nuxalk *slhk'msta* - language, is "that which is used for speaking", which in Michif *oma kaa-ishi-piikshkweeyaahk* is literally "the way in which we speak", a very clear statement that the *practice* of language within a network of speakers is central to its meaning-making function in society, and is the domain in which speakers have agency. In light of the subject matter of this discussion, when I talk about language, I am including in the meaning of the term the practices associated with its use.

2.1.3 Determining mechanisms

Even with a concrete connection between language and well-being within an aboriginal context as discussed in section 2.1.1, the question remains of how exactly language use is impacting well-being. I know many unhealthy Aboriginal people with strong identities, and more importantly, I know many Aboriginal individuals who know very little of their language (though feel the loss of it strongly) yet are still very healthy, experiencing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. This suggests that there must be a mediating factor that connects language to well-being for some individuals, and at times might not be making the connection for others. This is further supported by the fact that there are other communities in Canada who have faced language loss yet have not faced an equivalent decline in health. This includes Ukrainian communities across western Canada, who have largely switched to English within generations of immigrating. It also includes the large Gaelic speaking population of Cape Breton, who had existed as a community, complete with strong ties to a lifestyle and a land base, followed by rapidly losing their language as a result of English-only education laws. While there were health impacts, they were of a different scale to those faced by almost all First Nations communities – identities were

impacted in a different way.

And identity is a prime candidate for being this mediating factor. Kirmayer et al. write that “It is likely that the mediating mechanisms contributing to high levels of emotional distress and problems like depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicide are closely related to issues of individual identity and self-esteem” (2000, p. 611). Turner (2015, p. 1) states that “healthy communities, with low rates of youth suicide, share a common identity, practice cultural continuity and are self-determining.” To restate this in negative terms would be to say that unhealthy communities with high rates of youth suicide lack a common identity, do not practice cultural continuity, and are not self-determining. Given that self-determination and views of cultural continuity are not universal across all narratives of identity, it is clear that the “identity” being discussed is not a general placeholder, rather what is being discussed are formulations of identity with specific attributes. Before exploring these specific target attributes in more detail, I will first share an approach to understanding identity and identity formation.

2.2 Diving into Identity

“The truth about stories, is that that’s all we are.” So says Tom King in his Massey lecture series, *The Truth about Stories* (2003, p. 2). Comprehending our lived existences means taking the discrete events and placing them in a context that gives them a meaning. The telling of this contextualization, whether to others or to ourselves is narrative, or story, and we all use them to tie together our experiences. The sum of those narratives and their interactions with our experiences and our world becomes what we call identity, the most tangible answer we can give to the question of who we are.

2.2.1 What I mean by story or narrative

Story (or narrative) can be seen as two things. First, as an action, storying or using one's voice is the active connecting of discrete events into a whole as done through introspection, review, vocal storytelling, or discussing of events with others. It is also the 'active' activity of listening to another tell a story, deliberately inserting the narrative of another into your own network of narratives, using them as well as your own stories to make sense of the experiences of another. I have called this active side of story storying (Barrett & McCreery, 2013), meaning the active practice of filtering events through our narratives, giving them meaning and at times allowing them to give us new narratives. Much of my first chapter is an example of my own journey to make sense of my own life.

The second side of story, though it is inseparable from the first, consists of the results of these acts of storying. For example, story can refer to the relationships between events established through active storytelling, relationships that result in a more complex picture of the world that our minds use to interpret our day to day, week to week, and year to year existences. Neurons that fire together, wire together, a principle that can be extended to memories that are recalled in series – they are interpreted in relation to each other, and connections are formed, meaning is made. The end result of storying is a network of references, a network of potentially meaningful relationships. New events or thoughts are filtered through this network and are given meaning as they are connected in to the pre-existing network of narratives. The section of my first chapter headed "taking the patch home with me" is a good example of how these experiences and stories can be re-interpreted and re-used to deal with new situations.

2.2.2 Factors in creating identity

Some exceptionally storied paths are so well-beaten that they shape every event or story to go near them. Other stories are able to exist independently of each other in our minds, allowing

some events to be given contradictory meanings at different times. Significant stories, insignificant ones, all of these narratives and many others together make up a web of meaning that as we use it is called identity. To put this in the words of another, “Out of the episodic particulars of autobiographical memory, a person may construct and internalize an evolving and integrative story for life, or what psychologists today call a narrative identity” (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 233). In this model of narrative identity outlined by Singer (2004, 2005), identity builds slowly over time as people tell stories about their experiences, both telling these stories to others, and also at times *with* others. This narrative-based processing of events leads to or is entwined with the use of these stories as tools to structure identity, and the accumulating knowledge of the practices of narrating our lives and reflecting and processing our experiences becomes a “story schema that provides causal, temporal, and thematic coherence to an overall sense of identity” (Singer, 2004). This schema becomes a tool that helps us shape our retellings of later events, letting us situate them and give them meaning. We can then use these stories to give meaning to new events, a practice of using stories as tools that has been called “autobiographical reasoning” (Singer, 2004).

This process is begun talking to one’s parents, continues in our conversations with other family members, then, at least in our world, is continued with one’s classmates and friends. For myself, this is an ongoing process, of which the latest significant act was sharing my own experiences with you, the reader, through this document – while it might seem that I am simply relating thoughts and events, the act of deliberate composition with an audience in mind was for me an act of creation, not just of story but of self, and the insights I had about my own experiences are now a part of me, and this model of identity suggests that this is the rule, not the exception. This model of narrative identity is discussed further in a number of other papers (McLean & Syed, 2015; McAdams, 2013; 2018). And though these narratives may be largely told in the context of friends, family, or community, and the practice of telling

these stories does serve to build a sense of community identity, this does not mean that these stories serve only to construct communal relationships. These stories tell narratives that tie the speaker to vastly disparate stories, objects, places, or ideas, far beyond the bounds of the cultural identities associated with any specific community.

McAdams and McLean (2013) add in some more important components of this process of identity formation. For example, some situations are more likely than others to make a story central to the developing identity. In particular, situations where stories are used to give meaning to experiences or traits makes these stories far more likely to be incorporated into an individual's or a community's identity. This is in contrast to stories told purely to entertain or distract (though within most communities, even stories that might be seen as "entertainment" reflect a range of purposes). They describe this incorporation of stories as turning "episodic information" contained in a narrative into "semantic" conclusions about the self. Simply reflecting on a story or telling a story to entertain is far less likely to significantly impact identity as is explaining oneself or one's actions to someone else. Similarly, situations where there is an attentive and responsive listener leads people to far more "personally elaborated stories," stories in which more effort is given to ascribing meaning to events (2013, p. 236). Finally, they state that meaning making in the context of a relationship, either through shared experiences or shared storytelling, is more important for identity than stories told, however meaningful, outside of the context of a meaningful connection to another person (ibid).

All of this storytelling, all of this meaning making, is itself built on the ability to critically reflect on the events of our lives, the ability to re-visit experiences in thought, and undertake the act of creation that is the putting of experiences into narratives, narratives that are situated through the power of our mind to compare, contrast, and connect themselves to other events and other narratives. Agency as the expression of choice must be preceded by awareness of choice, and the recognition of preference, all of

which come about as the result of the ability of the self to reflect on one's experiences. This reflection is itself contingent on engagement or openness to experiences – i.e. the engagement with things that can then be reflected upon.

In light of this, the development of a resilient and non-fragmented identity depends on several factors. The individual or community *must have* the understanding of how to speak (developed through engagement and reflection), the power to speak (to oneself and others), attentive listeners, and real relationships. Furthermore, the individual or community must act on these factors by actually speaking, seeking out those who will listen (or responding to those who offer an ear), creating relationships through communication, and communicating meaningfully in those relationships once established. Without these starting factors, the process becomes much more difficult, even when an effort is made, and the resulting living identities can often feel insecure or fractured.

2.2.3 What can identity look like?

The way in which an identity interacts with reality is highly dependent on the narratives that that specific identity consists of. Because of this variability, the mental toolbox that is useful in a specific situation will not be a magic bullet of core principles or “just-right” experiences, instead what is needed is a broad knowledge-base, with many tools, combined with an in-depth understanding of the specific situation of the community that will allow the individual to combine what they have in a way that works. Although the above section shows some uniformity regarding the mechanisms that lead to the formation of identity, the resulting identities are incredibly heterogeneous. The following are just some of the binaries I have seen used to categorize identities: urban stories versus rural stories, tribal identities versus individualistic ones, guilt-based morality versus honour-based morality, male versus female, and many, many more.

And all of these individual narratives or identities can be evaluated in a variety of other ways. An approach that I have found useful is to evaluate these narratives in terms of the strength of various narrative themes (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; Somers, 1994; Adler, 2012; Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; McCoy & Dunlop, 2017), components of personal narratives that have been shown to affect the impact of these narratives on a range of outcomes. McAdams and McLean (2013, p. 234) outline the narrative themes they have used in their research, which I use in this paper. I have included underlining and boldface to mark the defining characteristic of each narrative theme:

To what degree does this story cast the protagonist as having **agency** or power to effect change?

To what degree does this story reveal connections or **communion** with others?

To what degree does the protagonist experience **redemption**, where “bad” or negative experiences lead to “good” or positive outcomes, thereby redeeming the initial experience?

Does the protagonist talk about positive experiences or situations undergoing **contamination** through outside forces?

Is there **meaning making** going on in the narrative?

Is there **self-exploration** going on through the telling of this story?

Is there **coherent positive resolution**? Are the threads pulled together into a non-fragmented whole?

Within this framework a single experience can be described in a way that casts the protagonist at opposite ends of every single one of these scales. A defeat can be a learning experience, or the straw that broke the camel’s back. An accident can be nature proving to you that there is no hope, or it can be the opportunity to take charge of your own life and reconnect with your roots! And the dominant

narratives of individual's respective narrative identities can be based on different scales. For example, in interviews by Hammack (2008) Palestinian youths emphasize contamination in their personal narratives, while Israeli youths emphasize redemptive stories, potentially making finding common identities difficult. And in contrast to all of the above, by avoiding meaning-making or self-exploration (I've left the underlining to make the connection to specific narrative themes obvious) these experiences could be narrated with no meaning making whatsoever, or where the meaning given is simply powerlessness.

The extent to which various narrative themes figure in one's narratives of self is not simply a way to differentiate between various identities. These themes have been shown to have a significant impact on mental health, well-being, and maturity (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Stories that promote our agency over events, ones that situate us in the context of community, and ones that frame episodes of suffering in the context of redemptive story arcs that are resolved are associated with more well-being and adaptability in the face of new challenges, while identities where stories don't resolve because of constant outside contamination, which leave the self without a sense of agency, can have the opposite impact. Narrations that involve self-exploration and meaning-making will lead to personal growth, while those devoid of introspection or relationship will have less of an impact.

Looking back on my first chapter for example, I present a story that contains both responsibility and examples of people being able to realize these goals (agency on the part of myself and members of my family). I talk about the closeness of my relationships with various individuals, primarily my grandfather, and share how that relationship or communion shaped how I related to other experiences. I talk about how my depression and demotivation following my grandfather's death led to my decision to return to mushroom picking for a season, and I then frame the whole experience as one of mental renewal or a redemption of the situation. I discuss how I had to deal with attitudes that I felt delegitimized the reality of my connection with my grandfather, and those aspects of my identity which

were connected to him, with the resulting contamination continuing to rear its head from time to time. A large portion of the chapter is an attempt to look at these stories in terms of how they have shaped me – one large act of self-exploration – and the goal of this thesis as a whole is to give not just these stories, but my whole endeavor and identity as a language teacher a coherent positive resolution though I would settle for just coherency.

These stories represent my efforts to understand my life in terms that give me strength and perception as I face new challenges, letting me understand the life I have led to this point as being one of purpose and growth, whereas recasting these same experiences in terms of constant dislocation, lack of real knowledge of what was coming next or the very real lack of control I have had over many of the most important life decisions I have made, could easily leave me a bitter person whose gut response to new challenges would leave me feeling depressed and powerless each morning.

For me, a sufficiently clear summary of the model presented so far would be the following. Quoting Tom King again, he says that “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (2003, p. 2), or in other words, our identities are a narrative construct. We tell stories that give meaning to our experiences and situations. We structure these stories drawing on the examples of the stories we have heard previously. We tell them in the context of the social relationships that we find ourselves in. The depth or strength of these identities depends on the extent to which we are able to give meaning to these experiences within meaningful contexts or relationships. The positive impact of this identity on our well-being depends on the extent to which it promotes narratives that cast us as agents, connects us to others, frames experiences in positive arcs, encourages self-exploration and provides resolution.

In the remainder of this thesis, I will be referring to all of these factors, with the most significant one being the question of presence or absence of agency in a narrative, a narrative theme emphasized

by several authors (Adler, 2012; Holstein & Gubrium, 2012; McAdams & McClain, 2013, p. 235).

2.2.3.1 Getting into the specifics

That identities vary widely is true within the Aboriginal context as well; there are just as many significant differences between various Aboriginal communities as there are in the broader population. Different communities have cultures with radically different focuses, for example various Dene peoples have stories that heavily focus on surviving, on never giving up, and as a result I have met a few Dene who have survived very desperate situations because of their willpower. In a trip across the north, every person I spent time with, young or old and across five communities, told me stories of personal and community survival, and the collection of Gwich'in stories I have is likewise primarily about survival (Mishler, ed., 2001). Nuxalk stories are different, creating stable communities that are able to deal with a wealth of resources without it leading to war or serious inequality. The differences are not just variations on the same theme, they result in narratives that are almost incomprehensible to the other, to the point where even after living for half a millennium in close proximity to each other, Nuxalk people in traditional stories freely admit to not understanding the Algatcho people, and claim that the confusion is mutual (McIlwraith, 1948). Métis stories, as I discussed in chapter one, amongst other things have helped many of my friends understand the traumas of their parents and grandparents, while also giving us some hope looking forward. These differences can be as significant as those described between Palestinian and Israeli youth (Hammack, 2008). Crees, Blackfoot, Ktunaxa, Tsimshian, Dene, Mohawk, Salishan peoples, all have identities that situate them quite differently in relation to their various experiences.

To say these communities have nothing at all in common is likewise a disservice. In the same way that conceptualizations of well-being share commonalities of holism despite many differences (Tobias, 2015, p. 35), all of these varied identities include strong relational components, practicing relationship to

land, to language, to family, and to community practices. Many of the implications of these holistic values can be seen in literature on Indigenous resurgence, for example in the compilation of resurgence writing from a wide range of Indigenous communities, *Everyday acts of resurgence: People, places, practices* (Corntassel, ed., 2018). The model of identity and its formation shared above has emphasized agency enacted within the context of communion with community, and within healthy social relationships, both themes which figure prominently throughout the work of many authors. In addition to these qualities which can be understood as being descriptive of relationships and practices, these writers also focus on the contents of these relationships, recognizing the importance of place and community-recognized structure to grounding an individual not only in relationships, but also grounding those relationships in a further set of supportive relationships to place, to resources, to narrative, to practices and to purpose. These “content” relationships may not always be directly facilitating the development and strengthening of identity through directly facilitating the incorporation of narratives into a sense of self; instead they provide individuals and their communities with the tools needed to do that work – they secure a sense of grounding and security within the mental and physical resources that provide individuals with capacity to act, and confidence to express their agency in decisions and actions.

In my own experience as discussed in section 1.4, I have found the interaction between place and practice to be incredibly impactful – practices in place build relationships, memories, frameworks. And reflection on experiences in place become a touchstone that shapes practice. This reflection can give an ongoing awareness of the importance that our actions in place can have in preventing the establishment of practices that ignore the reciprocal nature of our relationships with land. In a similar way, maintaining meaningful relationships to all members of our community first provides a space for the practices that develop identity, and secondly by situating our actions in the context of those with whom we have caring relationships, ensures reflection on the impact of social actions. Our practices

then have the twin touchstones of a relationship with a physical environment that we care for and cannot ignore, and relationships with a social environment that likewise cannot be dismissed. Stories and other narratives coming out of our practice serve to emphasize and reinforce these relationships, ensuring that our community identities are regularly interrogated by the realities of our physical world and our social world.

2.2.3.2 The darker commonality of history

Standing in the face of these narratives of holism, relationship and self-determination, today these communities' narratives also have a (somewhat) new commonality, a shared history of dealing with colonialism in all its forms; Residential School, language loss, relocation, paternalism, essentially a massive collection of imposed narratives telling people what they can do, what they cannot do, and also making it very clear that the choice is not theirs. Reflecting back on the narrative themes discussed earlier, these are stories that delegitimize communion, present a constant source of contamination, and directly attack our voices, challenging meaning-making and self-reflection. And above all, these stories minimize agency, forcing us into someone else's story, where the coherent resolutions are not for us, and are not positive. Out of this interaction with colonialism these communities often find themselves in possession of multiple, conflicting ways of understanding life, including conflicting ways of understanding well-being, land, resources, family roles, the meaning of life, and of course language, some of which have already been touched on or will be discussed in later sections. These stories also vary in the extent to which they are fully embedded in the lives of those who are influenced by them – conflicting narratives and a reduced sense of personal agency result in stories with less “I know who I am” and more “I think this is a part of who I am” – less cohesion and more fragmentation.

One set of conflicting narratives that does need to be looked at before moving on is related to some of the ways that people have been taught to view identity. This is discussed in an Australian

context in the book *An ethnography of Stress: The social determinants of health in Aboriginal Australia* (Burbank, 2011) In this book, two types of “outward” identities are discussed, an outward identity being the way in which you situate or identify yourself in the broader social structures you are a part of. The first identity is a function of social collectives, and is defined in terms of language, kinship and country (territory). Who is your family, and who do you hang out with? What do you do with these people, and where do you do it? The narratives that answer these questions of people, practice and place become this outward identity. The second narrative of outward identity is not told by you, but by others, and is based on what can be called “static characterizations of the individual” (Dayton & Rogoff, 2013). In the Australian Aboriginal context, the focus is on questions of who is to be included in or excluded from a nationwide category of “Aboriginal.” Your own actions or expressions of your own agency have no bearing on this identity. Instead, this type of outward identity is placed on you via government fiat without any meaningful input from you either as to whether or not you belong, or what this identity will tell others about your role, your character in the play of life enacted where you live.

This contrast between a narrative of identity over which the protagonist has agency and a narrative of identity where the protagonist is a secondary character also plays out in Canada in much the same way as it does in Australia. I have had several people congratulate me on becoming “Indian” thanks to a recent (April 14, 2016) Supreme Court of Canada ruling on jurisdiction over Aboriginal rights (Vowel, 2016) mentioned in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982). It feels very strange to have ‘who I am’ being decided by a judiciary almost 5,000 km away, and this is a debate that has only touched my identity and existence in a very small way. For many First Nations people, the contrast is between an identity that is mediated by the individual, and an identity that is imposed, allowing no creativity or agency.

I want to make it clear that this non-agentive imposed identity is not actually an alternative way

of understanding identity formation – this crippled perspective is still the result of narratives shared and told, it still is given an increased impact through the meaningfulness of the relationships within which it is formed, and it still is a tool for meaning making. The difference is that even when accepted, it is an incomplete picture that devalues community practices, and creates a situation where reclaiming identity becomes an act of establishing power over a controlling institution, rather than recentering identity in practice and community.

By allowing such a non-agentive narrative to have a central role in our creation of self, the impacts of lack of agency in this one narrative can bleed into other aspects of our lives. This narrative, in excluding the individual as a mediator of identity, diminishes the opportunity for meaning-making, the personal creation or recognition of communion, and in fact, by removing voice, the narrative hurts individual involvement in the creation of any narratives at all, harming all relationships.

The ability for a person to even build a coherent sense of identity, or to establish their relationships and sense of self in communion with others and the world seems to be predicated on a certain expression of agency. As a result, this is a situation where a narrative's negative impact on well-being can best be eliminated not just through empowering people and communities, but also through using our voices to tell alternative stories of identity that don't simply claim control over colonizing structures, by actually replacing those narratives with ones that promote well-being.

2.2.4 Maximizing connections

This is a section that I really only realized that I needed to include after I finished writing most of this thesis. It's to support the idea that maximizing the depth and number of the mental connections we create with our minds is an intuitive principle that can be used to make further assumptions. The challenge is that this belief is also strongly tied to cultural or moral values that I hold, and trying to

disentangle them has proved a challenge. I'm going to present arguments for both a weak version of the principle, and a strong version as well.

To state this idea in weaker terms, I can draw on the questions posed by McAdams and Mclean (2013). To what degree does the story cast the protagonist as having meaning making power? To what degree does the story reveal communion or connection with others? To what degree does the protagonist experience redemption? In all of these statements, an implicit assumption is that as the degree of agency, the degree of connection or the degree of redemption increases, the positive impact of the story on identity also increases, *and that such an increase is a good thing*. Their final question as I summarized it was "Is there coherent positive resolution? Are the threads pulled together into a non-fragmented whole?" This idea provides something of a minimum threshold for achieving some significant benefit. If the various threads are not connected, if those connections have not been made, then resolution and meaning is not coherent, and the corresponding identity is fragmented and difficult to apply to new situations. By contrast, beyond some threshold, some sort of critical mass of connections are made, and identity becomes an interpretive tool that applies to most things. For me, this idea of achieving a minimal threshold of connection is the "weak" version of what I want to say.

Now I want to present the strong version, along with the issues I may have with it. A friend once told me the worst thing they had ever heard of someone being called. It wasn't a sexist put down, it wasn't slave, it wasn't any reference to looks, it was lazy. An elder got up, thanked everyone for helping out, and then singled out a person who was benefiting from the work but doing nothing and said "except for this *nunulhuk'* (lazy) one here." The idea was that they were ignoring and disrespecting all the actions and work of the people who had gathered for their benefit. In Michif, I think the worst thing I could call someone is similar, *aeñ booryaeñ*, a worthless person, and when I've heard it used, the main implication has been that they don't take care of their children, they think only of themselves.

When I think of lazy, some fairly disturbing values come up in my mind – the idea that using lazy as a put down is criticizing somebody’s commitment to making money. This was part of the stated ideas behind the potlatch ban – First Nations people were working in order to potlatch and respect their relations and commitments, rather than in order to build the economy. Therefore they were lazy. But when I look at the context of calling someone *nunulhuk’* or *aeñ booryaeñ*, it isn’t a criticism of someone’s commitment to money, it’s a criticism of their treatment of their relationships. The corresponding statement that someone is a “hard worker” can similarly have these multiple meanings, either someone who is strongly committed to the company they work for, or someone who will do whatever it takes to care for their family.

For me, this cultural commitment to valuing connections has implications when mapped onto the questions of identity. If a practice is to be meaningful, make it as meaningful as possible. If a ceremony is important, have the people present who will make it the most meaningful, and do it in such a way as to build as many relationships as possible. And if I am spending time on the land, find a way to be as engaged as possible. This is the foundation that principles of stewardship are built on – we care about a place, we engage with it, we learn about it, and in the end we have a relationship that includes both sufficient knowledge to make good decisions, and the emotional connection that means we make those decisions thinking about more than ourselves.

As you read through this thesis, in particular through chapter 4, I will say a lot more about this idea, both giving depth to it, as well as limits. In section 4.2.4 I talk about how this isn’t a call to learn everything and be aware of everything all at once, but rather a call to maximizing engagement throughout life, resulting in ongoing growth. In section 4.2.6.2 I look at how ongoing reflection helps establish and build this critical mass of mental relationships, and some of the implications. Finally, throughout most of section 4.3 and its subsections I go over how various types of relationships can

complement and add depth to other relationships, really giving a sense of the benefits of choosing ongoing engagement with an ongoing goal of being more engaged with my family and community responsibilities, and more connected to my physical environment.

Even after this summary, I do know that this is a difficult balance – I am asking people engaged in this work to be *all in* in life, to be fully engaged. This doesn't mean to be overwhelmed, or to pursue sensory overload, but to find that sweet spot within a growing capacity for learning that allows someone to engage fully with the questions they are facing in light of their responsibilities and stage of life. Balance is not something we find once, even in responsibilities, it is something that requires ongoing reflection.

2.3 Summary

At this time, I'm going to do my best to summarize everything that I have presented over the past two chapters into two paragraphs. This summary is the heart of my thesis, and the basis for the work I do in the remaining chapters as I look at the implications for practice. Over the past few years of thinking about the statements that follow, they have at times taken on a life of their own, as my mind finds more and more connections between them, but at their heart, they are based on what you have just read. As a final note, over the years I have included underlining, boldface, and italicized words and phrases in this summary in order to help myself connect the ideas, especially during the year after I had covid, during which it often felt hard to keep more than one idea in my head at a time. I have chosen to leave these in, with the hope that the added emphases will likewise be of use to you.

A narrative identity that supports wellness and well-being looks like the following. The individual and community has the power and opportunity to speak, has listeners, and real relationships. Furthermore, the community has access to **ample examples** of what using this **voice** looks like, and

people do draw on those examples and on these **provided opportunities** in order to **speak meaningfully**. This narrative identity **reinforces the agency** that **powers** this process. This identity echoes and builds on the sense of community in which it has been created. This identity guides people in **telling stories** using **content** and **practices** that frame themselves as **resilient** by *redeeming negative experiences* and *building on agency and relationships with people and place*. It pushes them to **CONTINUE** **engaging in meaning making and self-exploration** as exemplified by the rest of the community that supported them in developing their own voice to begin with, resulting in **life-long reflection and engagement** with multiple narratives.

Because of this narration, people develop narrative identities that are ***comprehensive in their scope*** and depth. All of this work is **grounded in a network of resources** that build a *sense of belonging in community* through **family and community stories and practices**, a *sense of belonging in place* through **seasonal on-the-land practices**, as well as **stories embedding places in identity** of both self and community, a *sense of belonging in purpose* through **communicated values and community aspirations**, and a *sense of security* in the **resources needed** to realize these aspirations, a *sense of security* that comes from the work of **community reassertions of agency** and cultural resurgence.

In the following chapter, I will outline how this process has been derailed and subverted.

3. So, just what can hurt identity?

“Все счастливые семьи похожи друг на друга, каждая несчастливая семья несчастлива по-своему.

Every happy family is happy in exactly the same way, but each miserable family is miserable in its own unique way.” Lev Tolstoy

In the opening line of his novel *Anna Karenina*, Lev Tolstoy gives a massive oversimplification of function versus dysfunction, which nevertheless contains a core of truth. For every well-balanced approach to life, there are at least two directions you can pick to fall off, and once falling, you can go a long way or a short way. Whether you ascribe to Sam Harris’ “moral landscape” (2010), describing the range of human societies as mountain peaks of best practices surrounded by mountainsides and valleys of ways of life less conducive to human well-being, or if you prefer the Biblical metaphor of the narrow gate contrasted with the broad road leading to destruction (Matthew 7:13) it seems clear that there are more ways to mess things up than there are things to mess up, and the same is true of identity. And this takes me to the word ‘trauma.’

The word ‘trauma’ gets used a lot and with some reason. We use terms such as physical trauma, mental trauma, intergenerational trauma, and historic trauma. When I began trying to understand the specific ways in which language loss could damage identity, much of what I read talked about the impact of trauma on identity. The problem for me was that many cultures have faced massive traumas but have not had the same outcomes regarding their language or other long-term impacts. In other words, it seemed that “trauma” is often used as a catch-all to conflate many experiences that are not necessarily equivalent in their specific impacts. Put in other words, to say someone has experienced trauma without specifying how is like saying someone wasn’t doing good, without explaining why – it doesn’t offer a

clear way forward.⁸

For example, looking specifically at some events commonly labelled as “Historical Trauma,” we find very different impacts on language. World War 2 brought with it the Holocaust. Over six million of the tens of millions killed were Jewish, most of them Yiddish speakers. The governments of the Axis powers and collaborating organizations made a concerted effort to destroy the Jewish religion, ethnicity, identity and culture. At the end of the war, many of the survivors moved to a new land, and rather than doing what they could to rebuild what had been destroyed, they en masse abandoned their Yiddish identities *and language* and embraced a new language, Modern Hebrew. A second example I have some familiarity with is the Rwandan Genocide. Over a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in a few months, leaving a nation solidly traumatized, yet language went unchanged (except among the ruling class). And looking at a related narrative, in several dozen interviews I conducted with students and teachers around the country in 2008, attitudes towards education and the enthusiasm of families and their children towards schools are as high as ever, if not higher than they were prior to the Genocide. Their specific experiences had specific impacts.

Our capacity to respond at all plays a significant role in the impact of traumatic historical events. In the 1790s, smallpox hit the prairies and the Nehiyâw Pwât, the alliance between Assiniboiné and Cree, lost over half its population. But those who survived, including my ancestors, were able to rebuild their lives and cultures. My own family went through battles, and experienced raids and death from disease throughout the early 1800s, yet we remained who we were, responding to the challenges as they came. But when the full impact of the colonizing power of the Canadian government hit us in the years

⁸For a good discussion of this topic, see Denham (2008). Much of my understanding of this topic I credit to this paper.

between and following the Resistances, something was different. The relentless onslaught of laws and practices targeting our rights and governance gradually wore down resistance and trapped people in their new lives without feeling like they had the power to rebuild their identities. The violence that deliberately attacked our agency as a people was a stress that our strength and agency could not spring back from in the same way, especially considering that much of this violence was done to children, separating them from their communities in order to prevent them from acquiring the strengths that would let them resist. The best many of our parents and grandparents could do was to give us enough of an understanding of those experiences that we could feel part of a resistance.

Part of the difference between the impacts of these differing experiences lies in what we mean when we use the word identity. While I have already been very clear that when I talk about identity I mean “an evolving and integrative story for life” (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 233), there are other ways to look at identity beyond evaluating how it is formed or used. One aspect is scope, for example when we look at what identity was given up by Holocaust survivors, I am speaking of a cultural identity built around a language, but what was not given up was that aspect of cultural identity that defined them as individuals belonging to a specific community, even if that community was changing dramatically. In other words, the Holocaust was in some ways akin to the early smallpox epidemics I just mentioned – tragic and devastating, yet meaning making took place and the survivors rebuilt their lives, albeit with some differences. When the identities of children in residential school were attacked, the methods used were such that not only were people cut off from pre-existing cultural identities, they were also cut off from much of the capacity to creatively fashion narrative identities outside the scope of the specific cultural identity that was being targeted.

Looking at the varied responses to traumatic experiences over the past several paragraphs, it becomes clear that there are very different ways in which these traumatic experiences can influence

narratives of identity. Language and education, in particular, were central to the various approaches to colonialism that defined Canada's relationship with Aboriginal peoples for much of the nation's history. In order to understand just what the impact of a trauma was, knowledge that is needed in order to respond appropriately, it seems clear that I have to not just be aware of generalities like reduced agency and fragmented sense of identity, but I need to also have an understanding of the specific stories about language that have come down to us from this history. It will be the intersections of these different stories with our experiences that create a specific loss of function, the changes to our communities that we categorize as trauma. And it is an awareness of these specific impacts that can help us target our efforts in healing, increasing agency and voice where they are needed most, as well as across the board of our experiences. As Chew, Leonard and Rosenblum state: "We must identify, draw from, respond to, and celebrate these broad sets of relationships that colonization has fragmented" (Chew et al., 2023, p. 782).

In the sections that follow, I will first share some of the history of language loss that is relevant to my communities, and then outline some of those specific traumatic narratives as they influence the practice of identity development and maintenance. I will then look at some of the impacts that further reduced the ability of that identity to connect individuals to community, practices, and place.

3.1 History of language loss

For much of history and in many places, language change and shift are a normal fact of life. For example, my Métis community's Michif language is the result of the intertwining of two languages resulting from the coming together of two peoples, a history of creativity and relationships that we celebrate. The Nuxalk language that I teach in my day-to-day life also shows the mark of multiple languages from multiple language families coming together into one linguistic community, a richness of culture that is reflected not only in language but also in cultural practices ranging from technologies used

to architecture to marriage patterns. These changes in language do not seem to have been seen as devastating losses of culture with a wide range of perceived negative impacts, even as speakers may have wholly changed from their mother tongues.

In contrast to these origins couched in relationship building and synthesis, this current language shift has been characterized by force and violence couched in a broader project of colonization. The best way to understand this contrast in perceptions regarding language shift is through sharing a story of language change in Western Canada.

By the late 1800s, European languages had coexisted with Indigenous languages for generations all across what is now the Prairies and British Columbia. Aboriginal dialects of these languages, such as the BC Métis French dialect “le Français des Montaignes” or the Scots-based Bungee of other Métis communities, were spoken and understood by aboriginal peoples across broad areas, and the use of lingua francas such as Plains Cree, Indian Sign language, Chinook Jargon, or the aforementioned Français des Montaignes provided practical tools of intercommunity communication in addition to the widespread multilingualism that was already the rule of the day.

This multilingual and multicultural reality started coming under pressure when massive population shifts began happening. In the prairies, this primarily started following the defeat of the Métis in the first Red River Resistance and really took off during the 1890s. Further west, large scale displacement of people began during the Fraser Gold Rushes of 1857 and 1861-4 and really took off around the turn of the century as regions like the Peace, the Okanagan and Bulkley and Skeena River areas began to be “settled” heavily, and all the arable land in the various regions was snapped up by incoming populations. These influxes of settler populations were supported by laws designed to protect the incoming populations, with these laws being enforced by the RCMP.

Despite changing demographics, First Nations proved to be far more resilient than had been expected, and instead of assimilating into the "Canadian" economic and cultural communities, Indigenous people instead continued to work for the continuation of their own systems of government and their own cultural and economic practices.

In 1879, after receiving a report on the use of boarding "industrial" schools in the United States, the Canadian Federal Government under John A. MacDonald decided on an official policy of aggressive assimilation using residential boarding schools. While "civilizing" adults was deemed impossible, children were a different story, and the school system's goal was that it could help young aboriginal children "lead a life different from their parents and cause them to forget the customs, habits & language of their ancestors" (TRC, 2015d, p. 159).

Indigenous people were slow to buy in to these goals, and attendance remained low, so in 1894 attendance was made mandatory between the ages of 7 and 16, shifted downwards in 1908 to age 6 to 15, as seven-year-olds seemed to be retaining too much of their language and culture. Children were deliberately sent to schools far away to make visits from family difficult, and the pass system was used to deny families permission to leave reserves for the purpose of visiting their children, as contact with family was seen as being counterproductive. While the laws surrounding forcing attendance would be removed or changed, various means continued to allow for forced attendance through the 1970s.

Over this ninety-year time frame, over 150,000 children attended these schools, with predictable results for language. Many lost their languages entirely at school, and many other like my own great grandmother who kept their languages chose not to teach it to their children. The result was that in Canada in 2007, out of 976,300 self-identified Aboriginal individuals, only 24% reported being able to hold a conversation in their language (Norris, 2007). In 2011 reported data said only 17% could

(Statistics Canada, 2016). In British Columbia the situation is worse, with many languages having less than a dozen L1 speakers. In the ten years I have lived here in Bella Coola, over 90% of the remaining L1 speakers have passed away. In the country as a whole, only Inuktitut, Cree and Anishnaabemowin are not considered to be in danger of being eradicated (Romaine, 2017), although even these languages are in the process of being pushed out of many specific communities.

While without a doubt there were many different types of pressures on people to cease using their language, it is clear that this experience of residential school is central to why First Nations communities have experienced such rapid language attrition over the past century; however, this experience is central to something else as well. While I will talk about specifics later on, it is clear that while attending these schools, a very high percentage of children experienced significant traumas above and beyond the apparent trauma of prolonged separation from family, community, language and culture, and these traumas both individually and as a whole have shaped the impact that this loss of language has had and continues to have on individuals and communities.

In my earlier discussion about the nature of language, I argued that the *practice* of language was central to its community impact rather than merely the possession of linguistic knowledge, and in light of this, it is important to highlight that statistics regarding native speakers of aboriginal languages or even L2 speakers who can conduct a conversation in a language miss the reality of whether these speakers use their languages daily, whether or not they have a "practice" of use. Out of the native speakers remaining of Nuxalk, for example, I know of none who use the language daily or even weekly. In many communities, some "fluent" speakers may not have used the language for years, either because of a lack of opportunities or because of a variety of mental blocks resulting from the trauma surrounding their treatment as speakers of their languages.

This is not just a story about victimization; there has always been community and individual resistance to this process. The elders who worked with me on Nuxalk told stories of making serious efforts to relearn their languages after coming home from school or told stories of being taken by older children to places where they could use their language in secret (traditions that they would then maintain as they, in turn, became the older children), or even of going to the woods in order to talk to trees so as not to forget, and then teaching new children to do the same. All of this was done despite ongoing abuse directly targeting their language.

Although those who attended school often had a hard time passing on their languages because of how they had been treated, they did work to destroy the institution that was robbing them of their culture and language, work to keep children away from the schools, then fight for “Indian control of Indian education,” fight for children to be educated close to home, and later fought to have their languages taught at these new community schools, whether they be public or band operated. In most communities, it was these same survivors who would go on to spend decades working tirelessly, trying to teach the next generation to speak their language. It would be these individuals who would inspire the following generation of teachers and community leaders. This generation is the source of most of the teachers and language workers of today.⁹

This takes us to the present, where we have a large body of people who are deeply passionate about restoring vitality to community language use and practices, but who are also fighting against the legacy of generations of colonization and suppression. In the following sections, I believe a useful way of looking at this legacy is to evaluate it in terms of the narratives intertwined with it. I have focused

⁹ Over the past years in interviewing community members to assist in building curriculum building, several different elders have shared their own stories of the struggles surrounding education. This includes elders like Karen Anderson or Ron Hamilton who were personally involved in the fight for Indian control of Indian education. It seems likely that similar stories are present in most communities.

specifically **on narratives connected to language loss** that impact the **development of a narrative identity** that supports wellness and well-being. These impacts can be targeting practices that **facilitate healthy identity formation**, or they can be targeting the capacity of this identity to ground individuals in place and community. To put it in other terms, these impacts can hurt our ability to build a functioning tool, and can also limit the scope within which that tool can work and the amount of power it has.

3.2 Narratives cutting off practice

As discussed over the last few pages, the impact of residential schooling on language and identity has been central to many (but not all) of the narratives that have contributed to language loss and damaged identities, as well as put in place other narratives that made language recovery and resurgence more challenging. I have taken a few different approaches to building my own understanding of the impact of this portion of our history, with the goal of finding ways of sharing this narrative in ways that were comprehensible, compelling, and also true to the methods I have been upholding throughout this work. In particular, because of my focus on narrative identity, one of the methods I have relied on has been reading personal narratives of school experiences as well as drawing on secondary analysis such as the reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d). I will reference some of the school memoirs I have read through the years such as Bev Sellars' *They Called Me Number One* (Sellars, 2013) or Albert Canadien's book *From Lishamie* (2010). I at times also reference conversations with people in my family and in my community who experienced Residential School firsthand. This said, I will also be referencing relevant narratives that are *not* drawn from the specific history of residential school.

3.2.1 Lack of positive examples

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) characterizes Residential Schools as “places of strict and regimented discipline” (2015c, p. 184) more akin to prison than a family. According to the report, these schools expected little of students, turned schools into a place of fear, and provided little learning. Low expectations, strictly controlled environment, fear, and very little teaching meant that students received very little of one of the most important tools needed for developing a healthy identity – ample examples of others using their voice in a positive way. This situation extended to relationships with older students, whose own experiences with the institution coloured their communication skills, meaning that rather than providing those positive examples to younger students, they often instead provided ample examples of abusive behaviour, which is what was learnt instead (ibid, p. 165).

3.2.2 Elimination of family connections

Likewise, pre-existing relationships which could have or previously had provided those positive examples, such as those with parents and other family members, were discouraged or limited (TRC, 2015a, p. 99), and siblings were routinely separated either into separate schools or discouraged from interacting with each other (ibid, p. 91). Without ongoing positive examples of healthy narratives, an important building block of a resilient identity is missing, and once missed can be harder to piece together at a later time.

This loss of family connections meant fewer real relationships to make sharing experiences more meaningful (McAdams & McLean, 2013), and likewise fewer attentive and responsive listeners to encourage effort in meaning making, and no building up of the agency of these children. This again resulted in establishing ways of communicating that continue to be passed down.

3.2.3 Taught non-communication

Not only were proper examples of healthy communication not readily available, but students were actively discouraged from meaningful communication. Residential school survivor Bev Sellars says the following of her experiences at Residential School. Talking about how showing emotion or talking back in any language was punished, she says: “I was taught not to communicate, something that has caused problems for me later in life” (2013). The previous discussion on the creation of identity suggests that no communication means no opportunity to even take the first steps towards developing a resilient identity. Without communication, relationships are harder to create and then scaffold from. Negative experiences cannot become those redemptive episodes because the process of contextualizing them – giving them meaning – is not able to take place.

Albert Canadien (2010) shares a very similar experience. He says: “I never questioned anything, nor was I given an opportunity to question anything. I was never given the encouragement to look at something beyond its present state. No ‘what if?’ or ‘what does it mean?’ I just had to believe.” In other words, self-reflection was discouraged, and meaning making denied. Canadien links this narrative of silence and disempowerment to language specifically, giving examples of being punished for speaking his language, without understanding why. He also shows how the “do not question” narrative coloured his interactions with the nuns operating the school regarding language, leaving him with a feeling that the rules against his language were arbitrarily imposed, as the sisters at the school frequently spoke their own languages amongst themselves. As in Sellars’ (2013) case, no communication left Canadien without voice or space to make meaning, no relationships to make meaning in, no attentive listeners, and no agency to make meaning. He was left with a narrative about passively accepting what is done without agency. And once again, all these ways of viewing oneself can be passed down to future generations, as while there can be many reasons for silence, the message of silence when decisions are being made is

powerlessness or disconnection from agency.

3.2.4 Trauma and the ability to learn

The practices at residential school related to language use also had serious impacts on the long-term ability of students to learn and grow. For example, Alice Blondin-Perrin in her book *My Heart Shook Like a Drum* (2013) speaks of the impact of her experiences on her learning abilities. She says “I was humiliated and hurt many times without the ability to properly explain myself to anyone. My voice was silent. My thoughts and feelings were hurt many times resulting with hatred for the mean Grey Nun Supervisors which I never exposed but kept it inside of me feeling rage but unable to express it to anyone.” She immediately ties this to her own language as well as communication in general, talking about how when the sisters spoke French it made her feel she “wasn’t worthy enough for them to explain what was said.” Speaking more about language she echoes Canadien, saying “it was arbitrary, they spoke French around us, never explained why our language was wrong, it just was naughty.” Arbitrariness combined with force made clear that lack of agency. She continues: “Their decision [the Nuns’ and Brothers’] created long-term problems for me. A feeling of stupidity remains with me as I cannot speak [my language] to this day. I could not learn again because of fear.” She finishes with what was for me the hardest line to read in the book – the line the book is named for – saying that whenever she tried to relearn her language or say anything in it, “my heart would beat very fast, pounding for minutes at a time.” These feelings of stupidity would not only prevent her from relearning her language, but also make it hard for her to directly support following generations. And while these feelings might be centered on language, they likewise remain present when any other challenges arrive. And the lack of self worth was manifested in self-destructive behaviour that was excused by statements that denied personal agency and intelligence such as saying that they were just “dumb Indians” (2013), again attitudes that could be passed down even without the accompanying abuse.

3.2.5 Trauma and the narrowing of reflection

I have also talked to people who told me about how proud they were of not “breaking”, the implication being that many or most of their classmates *had* broken, or given up their willingness to fight for agency. Ron Hamilton, a Nuuchahnulth elder who conducted hundreds of interviews with Residential School survivors, stated that while these stories of not breaking are common and are important to people, the evidence of his interviews suggests that all students had been broken (2018, personal communication).

The implication of being broken is a strong statement regarding the type and severity of the identity changes undergone by students in Residential School. A mental block between you and any personal agency means to have been rendered not just powerless in the face of traumas, but to have in some way lost the belief that fighting back is possible. Giving up like this is part of what I understand the TRC to be talking about in the statement that the Residential School environment promoted institutionalized helplessness. This is not so much a single narrative of life taken from the schools as it is an over-arching attitude to all of the narratives and stories in a person’s life; a fatalistic view of non-resistance that led to people who lived the “school life” long after leaving it, getting up by the bell, eating by the bell, and often passing on this unresolved legacy to the next generation. It was not just a lack of agency, but a belief that agency was dead; an institutional practice of giving no agency eventually became internalized as a sense of no agency. It becomes one of their narratives.

From conversations with Ted Campbell, a therapist specialized in complex trauma who is a member of the counselling staff at our school, another way of conceptualizing this goes back to the idea of narrative identity. Picture all the narratives that make up a person; the child, the mother, the provider, the athlete, the loser, the clown, the knowledge holder. When this person comes to engage in a new experience, for example a counselling session, the only person that shows up might be the wounded

child, or the residential school survivor, or the “dumb Indian”, with other personas being left behind (2022, personal communication). In Campbell’s words, health is “developmental progress” – that is, when a person is growing, they are healthy. Or to put it in terms that I have already used, when a person is engaged, they are in practice, and writing a story of agency for themselves that can take them in a positive direction. An example of this is how in the first chapter I talked about how the sharing of my stories represented my own efforts to understand my life in terms that give me strength and perception as I face new challenges. I talked about how this way of framing my life let me see it as a life full of purpose and growth. Another way of looking at this idea of growth or growing would be to see it as a stance of engagement – for example I could say that I am framing my identity as one that is engaged with a wide selection of life events and narratives, and there is likewise not just space for new integration, but an active narrative *about* what that looks like, that is, I see my life as having purpose and *growth*.

Campbell states that one of the times when development tends to stop is when a person is hijacked by one aspect of the self (ibid). Trapped in this situation, an individual can focus on defending and maintaining a core narrative at the expense of all others, never being able to compare perspectives and develop their own sense of agency – instead, simply enforcing the dictates of a narrative that cuts them off from developmental growth and well-being. From this perspective being “broken” is just one of a range of narratives that trauma can help hijack a person’s identity, yet all of these different narratives can lead to a similar narrowing or even rejection of engagement and a resulting loss of well-being or developmental progress.

3.2.6 Impacts of language loss on changing identity

Another portion of the narratives drawing from this history is the way in which pre-Residential School identities which had been formed in Indigenous languages were separated from post-arrival identities forged in English or French. In my time working with elders I have observed that sometimes

they will say things in their languages that they wouldn't say in English, with the changes shedding light on how their language has been connected to their identity.

I believe that the fact that these elders were stopped from using their own languages with their peers meant that they developed relationships that were tied into the new language, and the stories of the new language. While this is a personal anecdote, my own relationships that are formed exclusively in different languages are indeed quite different, in that for example my Russian identity is built on my Russian experiences and relationships – I treat people differently, joke differently, and have different survival instincts while speaking the language. When elders I have worked with speak their own language, they likewise put on identities which were created and experienced in that language, and which draw on different stories about who they are. Because for many elders their early experiences in Residential Schools were the last memories they made in their languages, these experiences have had a lasting impact on how they feel about themselves when they try to reconnect to their own language, especially if they have not had the opportunity to extensively reflect on it. Conversely, the English they were exposed to in their first years at Residential schools likewise formed a basis for their growing English language identities, identities populated with all the stories described in this section, as well as the coping mechanisms and instincts.

The statements that really started me thinking along these lines were the phrases in Nuxalk “tm saawasilh,” and “saawas ti sawas” which I would translate as “we’re just siwashes” and “dumb Indian.” I’ve heard these said in Nuxalk several times, but I’ve never heard the equivalents said in English by the same people (though I know that for many people, these attitudes are there in both languages). This echoes Bev Sellars’ words regarding her own experiences at Residential School, where similar statements were commonly used by the students themselves to excuse mistakes (2013). I do not think it is too much of a jump to suggest that certain fears and insecurities are tied up with the identity that is put on when

these survivors switch back to their own language. When speaking their own languages these elders then pass on these negative narratives. All of the language teachers I work with have stories from when they were children about being called stupid by elders for not being able to speak their language, and in every case I have asked about so far, the elder expressed these attitudes while speaking their language, rather than while speaking English.¹⁰

For me there is more than one connection to unpack here. First, like many of the previous narratives, connecting language to stupidity sets the groundwork for an individual to have fewer opportunities for meaningful conversations, and in particular blocks conversations about one of the domains of life that people feel is the most important, namely language. The attitudes embedded in the practices of calling oneself stupid again constantly degrade any attempts to build a voice, downplay agency, resulting in eliminating responsibility, and instead of framing people as resilient, create and pass down a story of even further separation from meaningful engagement.

Secondly, this is a case where a narrative is preventing any identity from being comprehensive in scope and depth – different identities are engaged and able to gain experience in different situations, but no single understanding of self is able to learn and grow from all experiences. For individuals who no longer use one of their languages, this means that some skills, memories, stories or practices are less likely to be used or accessed in their day-to-day lives, and as a result play a smaller role in their ongoing

¹⁰ This type of situation, where what our minds' access depends on what language we are thinking in, is called language-dependent recall, and is a studied phenomenon with experimental support (Marian & Neisser, 2000). It is also something that I've often observed doing language documentation work. Several of the elders I've worked with over the years found that as we began using their first language more and more, memories associated with the language began to return as well, leading to things like regular and vivid dreams of parents and grandparents, and a growing ability to give specific incidents and examples related to vocabulary or contexts being discussed. This was particularly evident during the years that Nuxalk elder Amos Tallio and I worked together; as time went on and we spent more and more time in the language, things that he swore he had never heard became things that were immediately brought to memory along with the relevant context, even in situations where he had never known the meaning of the word he was remembering.

growth as people and members of a community. Since the majority of many residential school survivors' exposure to healthy communication practices took place in their first language and also took place prior to attendance, these examples of healthy approaches to communication and behaviour might not even come to mind in similar situations later in life, as linguistic priming combined with the traumatic strength of their other memories of using various coping mechanisms to survive traumas.

3.3 Narratives cutting off grounding

My focus in what I have described above has been the disruption of the development of a healthy narrative identity through the loss of the examples, opportunities and agency needed for it to develop, as well as how these experiences can lead to the loss of the passing-down of the necessary practices to the next generation. In each of these cases, more has been lost along the way than simply the tools of identity creation, or the examples of positive relationships and healthy communication – a whole world of connections that would have been fostered through that communication was lost as well. The cohesion and depth of resulting identities was damaged, and the grounding of those identities in a sense of belonging to place, practices, and community was disrupted. In addition, the sense of security that normally arises from that grounding, the sense of security that allows for the free expression and development of agency, was replaced with insecurities and disconnect. In the section that follows I will be going over a brief picture of just a few of what I consider to be the main narratives or themes that connect us to our community and its environment, outlining some of the practices that maintain them, and how those practices and narratives have been impacted, twisted, or replaced.

These main narratives or themes that make up our lives seem not so much to be destroyed as either replaced with an alternate or slowly narrowed in scope till they have been largely pushed aside. Some narratives like stewardship over land might be very deliberately and forcefully replaced with a new legal framework built on different stories, being attacked on one main front. Other narratives that

provide grounding to people, for example a narrative that encourages us to live in the present and stay engaged with all of our daily experiences, cut across all aspects of our life. Rather than a single narrative pushing us aside, we are hurt through incremental encroachment, with experience and event after new legal framework slowly replacing the original narrative in domain after domain, gradually reducing the potential of a given narrative to connect us to our world.

3.3.1 Impacts to a sense of belonging

Before talking about how a sense of grounding and belonging has been degraded, it's useful to first outline some of the ways such grounding has been maintained to begin with. At the heart of a feeling of belonging is an owned practice of connection to place and family – a perspective on family relationships and community as a lived practice rather than a possession or simple attribute. Reflecting on my Métis communities, this has been maintained through regular gatherings around holidays, dances, singing, and religious events such as pilgrimages or major life events. It has been done through the sharing of skills as men and women worked together or played together, and through the living out of values incorporated in how we participate in these practices. It has been grounded in evenings telling stories and legends, discussing politics (so much of it!) and sharing news and experiences from other communities. All of this over time initiates a young person into full membership of a community, one where they have a place, a voice, and an awareness of how and where they can engage. A person understands the ways in which their community can support them, and knows how they can contribute.

If I turn to the community where I live and practice in Bella Coola, I see a very similar context, with community participation involving working together on the land in various ways, participating in community decision making and projects, as well as potlatching – an undertaking that itself involves food harvesting and prep, as well as training, spiritual preparations and mentorship, followed by days of focused participation in creating and affirming relationships to people, place, the past, and the future.

For both communities, the practices that glued people into community have been eroded in similar ways. In the case of land, traditional uses were made more and more difficult. Métis farms were almost entirely lost as the communities were shunted to poorer and poorer land, and fish and game laws were heavily enforced on Métis leading to much of their subsistence lifestyle being conducted illegally or with constant watch. For example, we have a family story of my grandpa and his two siblings hunting ducks when they had no food – the seven-year-old went in to flush the ducks, the five-year old shot them, and the three-year old was left crying on the road to watch for the game warden. Even though I've never had a bad experience with one, and am in fact primarily vegetarian and rarely eat fish, I've heard enough stories that I feel on edge near Fish and Game officers I don't know.

For Nuxalk, traditional berry patch burning methods were made illegal, harvesting bark for food or shelter was made illegal off reserve, and using traditional fishing techniques like weirs or traps was made illegal. Again, everything was heavily enforced to the point where I found a sarcastic poem to the editor of the Bella Coola paper stating that the Fish Inspector would wade through a slough to his neck to deal with a fish trap that might catch a few fish a year, but would have to think long before dealing with a natural dam that was killing millions (Bella Coola Courier, 1913). Fishing now had to be done under the auspices of a cannery, using their methods, and accepting their quotas, and hunting and forestry alike were now activities undertaken only with permission, with all relationship with the resource being mediated through the state.

Taff et al. (2018, p. 872) go over a variety of ways that our oral, communicative cultures use language to interact with land, via medicine, place-based events, shelter, land related law, food harvesting, travelling over it, learning about it, place names, and more. When these interactions with the land are replaced, Taff et al. state that "Indigenous culture is destabilized; some people are lost; others cling to their language to bind their culture together" (ibid., p. 872). When language is also removed, for

example through residential school, “the fibers that held the people together, disappear”. Put into other words, the loss of land destabilizes communication, and by extension, language, in almost every domain.

A narrative being pushed in all of this is one in which people are no longer stewards of the environment. A way of thinking about place that involves community agency becomes less central to community conversations, and our depth of engagement with the land is reduced as we no longer are viewing it with as many potential modes of engagement as previously. And as the domains of lived practice narrow, the domains of language (any language) also narrow, as whole categories of experience are cut, or even entire communicative practices.

The storytelling that is seen as so central to many cultures really took a big hit with the advent of television and other forms of commercialized entertainment. Elders have told me that the last big Métis block jigging parties in Winnipeg took place just as television was being introduced and haven’t happened since. While that may be a slight exaggeration, it is definitely true that storytelling and communal entertainment have been largely replaced by consumer entertainment. A practice of storytelling that is still valued is being pushed aside with new practices and new narratives – narratives that describe us as consumers or viewers rather than participants, and the targeted reflection and teaching involved is replaced by passivity. This loss of reflection also can decrease the centrality of community practices to identity, again giving fewer reasons for deep engagement with the community’s world, and more reasons to focus on mass culture.

3.3.2 Losing ownership of health

Physical health is tied in to similar narratives. Historically my Métis community has had practices that contributed to our physical and mental health. This has included eating very broad diets drawn on a wide range of wild foods – a diet that matches our hardworking lifestyle, and relying on a deep

knowledge of plants and practices (both personally, but also on the part of medicine people) in order to treat illness or injury when it occurs. Other methods have included structuring our entertainment around activities that complement the physical demands of our life (by focusing on specific types of dances), and incorporating reflection on dangerous situations and accidents into storytelling practices. The Nuxalk nation similarly has had a broad diet built on a rich knowledge of both food sources and harvesting practices, a lifestyle rich in physical activity (including dancing that matches the demands of daily activities), a large body of knowledge regarding healing practices and the use of local resources as medicine, and a similarly rich practice of storytelling that ensures we are able to reflect on challenges and changes to health. In addition, communal meals and traditions about the giving of food to others are an important part of both communities.

These practices and bodies of knowledge have all been negatively impacted, first and foremost through the residential school experience as discussed previously, which left students with far less sense of agency with which to approach all these responsibilities and relationships. Many people lacked both the knowledge and the sense of agency and self-care to maintain agency over personal health, and instead relied on a medical system to treat the symptoms and deal with the results of a lack of self-care. This was exacerbated by both a narrowed available diet (through the elimination of traditional food sources), plus narrowed dietary habits (because of habits established at school, or habits developed to cope with school), plus economic impacts (the need to work more plus the availability of cheap but less nutritious staple foods). Another major change to these practices, a change that has only accelerated in the past few years, is the extent to which people eat alone rather than sharing meals. This trend is supported by increased social anxiety, as well as by recent massive increases in social media use and television watching, largely at the expense of social interaction. This means that narratives of food as a social connection remains a practice we talk about, but is becoming less and less of a lived and felt

narrative.

This sense of ownership of health extends to community ownership as well. As discussed in section 2.1.1, when youth lose confidence in their community's ability to express agency collectively, suicide rates increase exponentially over the provincial average (Hallet, Chandler & Lalonde, 2007). When some faith in ownership and agency is restored through any number of ways, including asserting stewardship over land and working towards language resurgence, suicide rates plummet (ibid.).

The pushing of institutional healthcare for treatment of things like tuberculosis and the delegitimization of local practice is also connected to a damaged view of agency.¹¹ For example, the TRC talked about the importance of traditional medicine not primarily in the context of its effectiveness, but rather because of the sense of responsibility and agency it represented for the population (2015a, 2015c). According to Dr. Harvey Thomassen, a long-time doctor and researcher living and working in Bella Coola, practitioners of traditional medicine are far less likely to be afflicted by lifestyle diseases in part because they take their health seriously (2022, personal communication) and are engaged with it. This is an indication that at least for these practitioners, the domain of health and medicine is a narrative that they are able to engage with. This means their sense of identity relating to health has not been fully hijacked by just one narrative of self, and, to use Ted Campbell's term, they are in fact in a state of developmental progress. In addition, people engaged in traditional health are also engaged in preventative health, and are likely to do things like choose a diet that provides strong nutrition, engage in exercise, and listen to their bodies.

¹¹ In addition, TB sanitariums in particular targeted agency through their practices of removing individuals from communities, with significant impacts on the well-being of both those taken and those left behind but now missing loved ones.

3.3.3 The role of language in strengthening identity

All of these practices are interconnected through the languages that we speak. While I recognize the critiques of the idea that language shapes the way that our minds perceive the world (the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis), I believe that at a minimum our languages can be powerful tools for helping us maintain awareness of the connections between things. For example, languages that have grown in location can reflect local realities better than an imported one (for example by having categories of ideas that reflect local life and reality) or words used can reflect local lived experiences (for example how in Nuxalk a vehicle's driveshaft is given the name that was first applied to prop-shafts in the fishing fleet). Areas of life that are important to a community become dense with possible meaning and shades, and important practices and experiences can lend vocabulary that gets applied far more broadly in a way of connecting multiple domains into fewer conceptual frameworks. A very good example would be some of the concepts discussed in chapter one such as *asmayuustn* – the use of the word meaning 'carrier or user of stories' to mean an educated person. The place where I personally notice things the strongest is probably when telling traditional stories, and realizing the vast amount of explaining that I need to do in order to convey what is actually being said – the references to values, the connections to other stories, and so on. To use a term from Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (2011, but first published in 1916), the language references its own *langue*, its own body of knowledge and practice, and translating individual words does not mean sharing context.

In all of these examples, the connections being reinforced through language and shared concepts are connections that were already being established through participating in practices and through talking about them within social relationships. Languages then become effective glue through gradually reflecting the community's practices and values, and that glue is applied through use. Over the past few years I've made a number of attempts to put into words just how effective a glue a language

can be, but the fact that the effectiveness is inseparable from the practices embedded in it means it is almost impossible (and perhaps not even a good idea) to try and separate out the impact of loss of practices from loss of language. Some things are clear to me, however; and that is that people learning the language are very quick to catch ways that the language reflects their values and practices differently than English does, and that because the losses of practices and the loss of language are deeply connected, people rarely think of the one without the other. To put this in other words, both today and historically, it's very hard to even think of a "narrative of language" that is not actually a story of life and practice, something that leads to many of our communities equating language with culture.

This way of perceiving language (as interconnected with the *practice* of culture and community) has faced significant challenges as well. The first obvious way is by the supplanting of it with a new language grounded in new practices, many of which have been discussed above. People have largely resisted this through the translation of practices into English, the continued sharing of stories and culture, and hundreds of phrases and terms referencing concepts and practices internal to the community's *langue* or practice of life that have developed new meanings inside these speech communities. Another way that our Indigenous languages have been given new meaning is through being pulled out of community created systems of knowledge, and placed instead into an entirely different *langue*, one where language connects to identity in an entirely different way.

3.3.4 Language made a character in a story

In addition to being a vehicle of expressing stories and connecting people through practices, language has also been made a character in new narratives of identity. While defining my terms in the introduction, I briefly outlined ways in which different views of language compete within the linguistic sphere. Put simply, one side focuses on language as thing, the other on language as (inter)action or practice. Language as a character is a third perspective, one that comes up in many different narratives

of identity, and narratives that also vary in their agency, redemptive power or resolution. It is within this paradigm that language, along with clothing, hairstyles, and names, was attacked as children entered the residential school system (TRC, 2015a), leaving them vulnerable and alone, or in the imagery of Robert Alexie's 2002 novel, looking and feeling like prickly porcupines and cracked china dolls, blank slates to be remade into something new by pasting on new symbols. In these contexts, I believe that language was attacked first as a *symbol* of identity or otherness, even as the attacks eroded the *practice* of language that actually *is* identity.

Historically, one of the strongest narratives to claim language as a central character is that of the nation state. Legitimate nationhood belongs to those with legitimate languages, and if you have no language, you are not a nation. This is an idea that is fairly young, fairly European, basically started in the 18th century and built off of ideas from the 15th century and later. Although young, the idea was the driving force behind the existence of many of the most powerful nations in the world today – France, Germany, the modern Italian state, Spain, Russia, and so on. The development of these ideas is strongly tied to developing approaches to legitimizing governments in a post-empire, post-feudal world, and generally resulted in some sort of power-over relationship between dominant cultures and minorities within the boundaries of these new Nation States. This story is very much at the origin of the attitude “if you don’t speak Indian, you’re not a real Indian,” and parallels similar narratives of “if you don’t speak Québécois French you’re not Québécois” and so on. There are many interesting and relevant narratives tied up in this topic, and for those who want to learn more, one starting point is Butler and Spivak’s book *Who sings the Nation State: Language, politics, belonging* (2007).

3.3.5 Sorting through language as identity

On the surface, “to be a real X you need to speak language X” sounds similar to statements made by our elders regarding the connection between language and identity. Statements like those made in

the title of the book *The Cree Language is our identity: kinêhiyâwiwininaw nêhiyawêwin* (Wolfart & Ahenakew, 1993) or even the assumed (w)holistic position taken by many communities that language *is* identity. The challenge is that there are very different ways in which these lines have been used. Some learners that I interviewed during my Master's research felt trapped in an imposed binary of either in or out. I summarized the impact as follows (2013, p. 20):

The either/or assumption common in the dominant culture that if you do not speak your language you are not really who you say you are is very widespread, meaning that making mistakes speaking is a challenge not just to who you are, but to an identity that is already being challenged. The resulting anxiety can have a strong negative impact on learner success.

To clarify the difference, I have to go back to the conflict over Cartesian dualism that was mentioned while defining what was meant by language (section 2.1.2). This same question over what constitutes the “reality” of something, its representation or the living-out of the idea, clearly applies to identity and language both.

The examples given previously of contrasting outward identities (imposed or self-created: section 2.2.3), contrasting perspectives on health (as stewards or as non-agents: section 3.3.2), and contrasting responses to potentially traumatic experiences (engaging with it, or narrowing engagement: section 3.2.4) do have their parallels in language. When looking at language, we can also see two views, one of language being the audible living out of culture, also communally constituted, and a second view, where language is a thing to have or to not have. A statement like “*Aen Michif niya aañ Michif mbiigishkwaan*” – I am a Michif, and I speak Michif” means that being Michif is a component of the community I belong to, and my language embodies that community and insofar as I speak it, it contributes to that identity. In this view, the statement is seen as *advice on how to be a Michif*. If I ascribe to the nation-state model, however, this statement can mean that there are two camps, those

who are Michif and those who aren't, and if you don't have the feature of "Michif speaker" you won't be allowed to check the "I am Michif" box. In this case, the statement is now a *rule that must be complied with* in order to be a Michif, rather than a tool to be used to evaluate and develop practice. Similarly, in his article "Plains Cree pêyâhtikowêwin: The Ethic of Talking Softly" Jeffrey Muehlbauer analyzes the statements and language usage of Cree elders including Sarah Whitecalf, Louis Sunchild and others, in which they explain how a range of Nêhiyaw values and relationships are incorporated into Nêhiyawêwin discourse patterns, supporting a similar understanding of the pronouncement of Michif elder George Fleury, "Aeñ Krii niya, aañ Krii biigishkwaan – I'm Cree, as I speak Cree" or the similar statements of Sarah Whitecalf in her previously mentioned book *The Cree Language is our identity: kinêhiyâwiwininaw nêhiyawêwin* (Wolfart & Ahenakew, 1993). The views of these elders use language as a shortcut for both the use of words and structures, but also for the embedding of culture in it. These views have been replaced with a narrative that accepts "a" connection between language and identity, but instead of one where the practice of life leads to both, view it where the *existence* of language gives permission to *claim* identity.¹²

Another way of phrasing this is used by Chandler in which he promotes the creation of identities using "instructional pathways that feature the signature tools and processes, rather than the material contents, of cultures in radical transition" (2013, p. 83). In a statement that I believe is very insightful for communities negotiating the practice of identity in a changing world, Chandler describes material contents of a culture as having a fairly short shelf life, especially as they lose their relational meaning. Language when seen as cultural content or the trappings of an identity, what I've called a character in a narrative of identity, is a far smaller force for identity building than is a practice of language that is

¹² For more discussion and some survey of other writing relating to the difference between Indigenous views of language and academic views of language, see Leonard (2017, p. 21).

reaffirming old relationships and creating new ones with both people and place. Participation in practices of language is where we interact with cultural and historical realities; it is via practice in community that individuals' agency both creates their own ontogenies but also modifies and claims a place in their cultural heritages.

I believe it was variations on this belief that identity was *primarily* a function of material contents (a category that was seen as including language) that led to many of the practices of residential school. In the final summary of the TRC, the commission chose to include the following quote from a survivor (2015c, p. 145) which really illustrates the extent to which this belief in markers of identity *being* identity was pursued:

Those schools were a war on Aboriginal children, and they took away our identity. First of all, they gave us numbers, we had no names, we were numbers, and they cut our hair. They took away our clothes, and gave us clothes ... we all looked alike. Our hair was all the same, cut us into bangs, and straight short, straight hair up to our ears.... They took away our moccasins, and gave us shoes. I was just a baby. I didn't actually wear shoes, we wore moccasins. And so our identity was immediately taken away when we entered those schools.

While the trauma and experience of disconnect felt by such individuals was real, at times I feel that students were *taught* that these physical trappings were identity, so when it was replaced, the new clothing and hairstyles became a symbol of difference, rather than being incorporated into ongoing practices and styles. Language as well was made into a symbol, then taken away, and used as a hammer to suppress future generations' desire to belong. This attitude stands in contrast to the statements of multiple Nuxalk elders who have let us know that if people were able to maintain stories, relationships and governance practices, the community would still be who it was before, without language. But in the face of loss of all of this, my impression is that language is sometimes forced to carry everything, with

the resulting pressures on learners often proving a real challenge to motivation and learning. I can simplify this point by simply stating that wanting the language that was taken from us has added in strong emotions to people's relationship with language, and these strong emotions can both motivate teachers and learners, but also become an additional obstacle that previously did not exist for learners of our languages. The addition of fear makes love and engagement challenging, cutting off reflection and growth.

3.3.6 Narratives of education

One additional narrative facing many of those to have attended Residential School is a distrust of the education system, often accompanied by a serious fear. Elders who have agreed to come and visit our language class in our classroom have gotten emotional and shaky just coming through the door of the building, this despite the fact that this is their own school that they personally were instrumental in creating for the community. The TRC points out that even as First Nations and Inuit communities have gained control over their own education systems, continued underfunding and lack of governmental support for Native education has contributed to ongoing scepticism on the part of communities regarding the ability of schools to be places of learning. As was pointed out by Dr. Cindy Blackstock at the 2016 FNESC conference (personal notes, Nov 25, 2016), First Nations have been given control of education without the resources to change it by developing appropriate curriculum, contributing to poor outcomes for students. This, combined with a lack of successful language teaching programs, means that not only do survivors pass on their fears regarding educational institutions, but our schools are not always able to counter these fears, even at times giving new reasons to distrust educational institutions, such as failed programs or poor outcomes.

The result is both a loss of practice, as we have fewer opportunities to build connections between generations within the school context, and fewer opportunities to connect learners to their

community's past, and also a loss of grounding, as this fear contributes to the siloing of education as separate from home, presenting one more barrier to the reincorporation of learning from one domain into a narrative of self that encompasses multiple domains.

Despite this discussion of many specific experiences of disempowerment, there are many contexts or situations where people live *with* agency. Much in the same way as gradual language loss seems to be domain by domain, the supplanting of agentive identity is not an on/off switch, and stories of resistance and healthy practices can exist alongside disempowering ones. To credit these harmful narratives with total power is to accept the premise that we as humans are not agents, and what I am outlining in this work is intended to be a source of hope, not a tool for reinforcing complacency, inaction or despair in the face of challenges that are within our capacity.

3.3.7 Impact of institutional Englishes

One aspect of survivor experiences and narratives of language not specifically dealt with in any of the memoirs I read or in the TRC report is the nature of the institution-specific nature of the languages acquired by Residential School students, meaning that students left these institutions using words, phrases and speech patterns that were a product of that environment rather than an actual representation of broader vernacular English. In an appendix to the document *Warrior Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men* (Mussell, 2005), Mussell outlines the importance of language as a carrier of metaphors, principles, patterns of interaction, relationships and culture. He then shows that the vernacular languages of the communities were carriers of the communities' cultures, while the English of the schools was *not* actually a carrier of a healthy "English" culture, but was rather a carrier of institutional culture. Because this institutional English was noticeably different from broader community vernacular Englishes, it continued (and continues) to be a barrier to acceptance into a broader community, with components of these ways of speaking becoming a part of

various Indigenous Englishes, including some of the institutional narratives associated with these Englishes now being tied to group identity with potentially damaging consequences.

While there is a lot more to be said on the impact of institutional cultures and how they have affected mental well-being, it is very clear that this is yet another example of a narrative stemming from this history that forms a barrier to experiences, hurting peoples' chances of taking on many of the societal roles that once were available to them, resulting in a narrowed field of engagement, as well as damage to the practices that support the development of identity as already discussed in 2.3.2.3.

3.4 Summary

In summary, as community practices were eroded through legislation, the encroachment of new forms of entertainment and demands on time, and the insecurities and traumas of returning residential school survivors, the breadth of narratives that promoted a sense of belonging to community and place grew narrower. As a result, these narratives connected people to fewer and fewer individuals, and to ever smaller modes of engagement with practices and place. The ever-narrowing scope for story and reflection meant that even when practices were maintained, the sense of connection to community resulting from them might not be the same, and the impact of legislation on governance meant that the connections between the land, agency, stewardship, and seasonal connections to place were backgrounded to many other necessary activities. The reduction in practices, and in the strength of community relations, results in a loss of a sense of security, both because of apparent dependency on resources outside of the control of a community, as well as because of lost trust in the ability of a community to exert agency or be meaningful in the world. Challenges to communication and decreases in a sense of agency meant more and more people cut themselves off from growth.

All of this has a negative impact on the well-being of young people growing up in our

communities. And through all of these various connections runs a thread or even a stream of language, a signifier of culture whose return is seen as being inextricably connected to the strengthening of all other connection narratives. When we embark on teaching language, an undertaking that in the minds of participants holds promise of well-being stemming from the restoration of these narratives, all of these narratives and the practices that support or hinder them have to be wrestled with and considered.

4. Building and maintaining an identity that supports well-being

In the previous chapter I have explored some of the historical factors and pressures within a western Canadian context that work against the formation and maintenance of an identity tailored for supporting wellness and well-being amongst speakers of Indigenous languages. At this point I want to look at how the development and ongoing practice of such an identity can be supported within the context of language revitalization. I will structure my description of this identity based on the summary I included in section 2.3. Step by step I will reframe this summary of a functioning identity as goals for action rather than as an end vision. I will then discuss some of the ways that myself, others, and our various communities are currently working towards these action goals, as well as discussing ways in which, in light of what I have presented in the past few chapters, these efforts can be expanded or better applied in the context of language teaching and language resurgence work through a clearer understanding of purpose.

This chapter continues in the same vein as chapter 3, in that just as I focused on a specific context in chapter 3, with specific targeted challenges, in this chapter I will be presenting specific solutions related to specific contexts that I have experience with. This means that I am not attempting to be comprehensive in my discussion of solutions to these challenges, in part because there are literally dozens of fields of practice within and outside of teaching, with hundreds of methods and techniques targeting many of the challenges I have outlined. Instead, I am focusing on what I understand, and on what I have encountered in my practice as a language teacher or as a member of my various communities while involved in work focused on improving well-being. This focus means some of these challenges will be examined in some detail (for example the use of stories and storytelling in reflection and training) while other challenges will be examined only briefly. These decisions are based in part on what aspects of these challenges have affected me the most, and on which methods or thought

processes I believe will be of the most use to language workers.

While on the surface this approach might feel somewhat haphazard, I feel that this is actually the appropriate way to focus this discussion for several reasons. First, many of the fields of practice related to well-being such as medicine, counselling, or education, along with their associated methods, are heavily focused on individuals rather than communities, and as a result do not present a clear understanding of grounding in place or community. In contrast, I have tried to reference approaches, methods or techniques that look both at individuals and at communities as being the domain of action and aspiration. Secondly, many of the programs, methods or techniques that I *have* discussed here are already being practiced in many of the communities involved in language revitalization, meaning that constructive collaboration, adaptations of methods, not to mention funding and human resources *already exist*, both as resources to be leveraged but also as known entities to many of you, my target audience. Third, as the naturopath helping me with developing healthy habits said, the most effective way to change our lifestyles is to take what needs to be changed and add it into a previously established routine – for example by doing my stretches at a time I already spend waiting for my coffee to be ready in the morning. This is especially true in changing teachers’ methods – adjustments to familiar methods are far more easily adopted than complete shifts (though I think I’ve done at least four complete about-faces over the past decade).

Finally, it’s important to acknowledge there are good reasons that the programs and methods I will discuss in this chapter are already being used in our communities - people have recognized them as good fits for a range of community goals, even if sometimes only intuitively. Here’s some information

about just a few of them. One program is known as Where Are Your Keys? (WAYK).¹³ This program is a collection of techniques that are used to gamify learning, in particular language learning. The program takes the physical response of TPR, and expands it to a ridiculous level through the use of sign language, but also incorporates a lot of other techniques that serve to give learners ownership of both the process and of what they are learning. In fact, this program's compilation of teaching methods includes practices that can target – directly or indirectly – almost every challenge discussed in chapter 3, yet very few of those I've ever talked to involved in the program have understood the program in these terms.¹⁴

I hold several other programs in similar high regard. For example, experiential education, described as “a teaching philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities” (*What is experiential education?*, 2023, np.). A related program focusing specifically on wellbeing more than learning is Adventure-Based Counselling (ABC), an approach to therapy that often involves activities like ropes courses, backpacking, rock climbing, or community service. It is group rather than individual oriented, and it focuses on increasing self-awareness, a sense of responsibility for choices (narratives of agency), and social connections. It is known for regular and effective use of group processing to reflect on these “adventure” activities.¹⁵

An Indigenous implementation of similar ideas is the Rediscovery movement, an organization that supports Indigenous/non-Indigenous youth camps. These camps, including a Nuxalk one founded in

¹³ and expands it

¹⁴ For a broader discussion of this program, see Gardner & Ciotti (2018) “An overview of Where Are Your Keys?: A glimpse inside the technique toolbox.”

¹⁵ My understanding of this program comes largely through long-term relationships with a number of practitioners and a number of long conversations.

1984 (Henley, 1996) stand out from some other approaches to ABC in their focus on place-based knowledge, and on building long-lasting relationships within specific local communities. An applied linguistic method that also heavily supports learner agency is task-based language teaching (TBLT), an approach to teaching language that organizes language learning around activities involving meaningful communication, generally through completing meaningful, real-world tasks (Long, 2014). These and similar programs aren't only choices of convenience, they also happen to be some of the best choices available, which is the reason I will often reference them or similar programs or resources.

My methodology in doing this research has been mixed, but as much as possibly has been a reflection of the principles and practices you are about to read about in this chapter. First, a combination of family members, teachers and friends listened to me, encouraged me, and pushed me to become an inquisitive and sharing person (giving me the power to speak, see section 4.2.1). My community gave me opportunities to be involved in meaningful consultation processes as a youth, including projects for youth health through National Aboriginal Health Organization. In addition, fellow learners, teachers, and community members involved with working for the well-being of my various communities befriended me, mentored and included me. This provided me with many opportunities for meaningful growth (section 4.2.2) as well as a wide range of role models (section 4.2.3). The ongoing involvement, support, and mentoring has continued for over twenty years (see section 4.2.4). Finally, and in many ways most importantly, several good friends, coworkers, and teachers (including most of the professors in the linguistics department at UVIC) have regularly engaged with me in long-term, meaningful reflection on a wide variety of topics related to this thesis (see section 4.2.6) including in contexts where I was required to effectively package my ideas so they could be understood (section 4.2.5). This reflection built on the practices of reflection on narrative and texts that I gained through my English Degree and discussed in section 1.3.4.

This methodological foundation has been applied in the context of my various changing roles through this time – being a full-time student, doing several years of language documentation work for three communities, more than a decade of language teaching for a wide range of ages and communities, in particular the past several years during which I have been teaching various classes from K4 through grade 12, including two years doing immersion (see section 4.3 on grounding). I have tried to remain aware of the needs of my students, their families, and my coworkers, and our institution has similarly done work to ensure that what we are teaching is grounded in the needs of our community. Some of this work has taken the form of open-houses or consultation such as that discussed in section 5.2, but in my opinion most of the work has been done informally as I, other teachers, staff, students and other community members build and maintain relationships, and have conversations about our hopes, goals, and values.

When it came to sharing this body of work with an audience, this methodology has been applied in the following way. First, I have shared my own worldview (sections 1.2 – 1.4) in order to allow the reader to ground themselves in my thought process. Through sections 1.5 and 1.6 I provided an opportunity for a deepening understanding through reflection on how this perspective is applied to ever broader contexts. In chapter two I tell a story of what identity is, then in chapter three I deepen the understanding of the implications of this identity (something I will discuss again in section 4.3.2) by using it as a lens for making sense of our recent colonial history. In this current chapter we will apply this developed perspective to understanding community work supporting well-being, including language teaching, and in chapter five we will use my reflection on a range of teaching practices and resources to allow readers to solidify their own reflection on the ideas and perspectives presented. My goal has been to teach, research, write, and present within the same methodological framework.

4.1 Terms

In the following sections I will be discussing how communities can work towards achieving a wide range of goals. The task of working towards these goals is shared between communities and all their constituent members and support systems, including families, extended families, teachers, counsellors and other school staff, social workers, youth workers, friends, classmates, coworkers, and more. I am going to refer to all of these people as “**communities and their members.**”

While any community’s goal is to achieve well-being for all its members, in this chapter and in most of my discussions so far, I have been focusing on a specific context – language revitalization. While this is a work that spans generations, with dedicated learners across all ages, the *greatest* potential for impact on identity lies with those who are going through the process of forming their identities, roughly from birth through childhood, adolescence, through school and into early adulthood. This is also the largest area targeted by most communities’ language programs. Because of this, when I talk about the primary recipients of the efforts of communities and their members, I will often use the term “**young people**” as a catchall (though I’m starting to realize that at times this encompasses everyone not yet an elder!).

4.2 Building practices to support the development of agency

The first group of goals I will discuss can all be understood as being related to the task of building practices. In earlier drafts as I experimented with using various vocabulary to share this perspective, I often used the two terms “agency” and “grounding” and would talk about the interaction between growing agency and growing sense of grounding. I eventually found that there were an increasing number of gaps, practices and considerations that didn’t fit neatly into either category, which led me to eventually transitioning to a slightly different way of visualizing the growth of an identity that supports

wellness and well-being. Now, in this section I will look at the ways in which various practices directly support the development of agency, how communities can work to reinforce the practices, and how these practices can influence language revitalization. I will look at the ways in which a community can help members ground themselves and their practices in community, place and knowledge in section 4.3.

4.2.1 Power to speak

In my conclusion to chapter 2 I stated that in having a narrative identity that supports wellness and well-being, individuals and communities have the power and opportunity to speak. As a goal, this can be restated as: Communities and their members will support young people both as individuals and as communities in having the power and opportunity to speak. In the following section I will look again briefly at what having the power to speak means and looks like within a framework focused on well-being. Following this I will look specifically at the context of language revitalization.

Having the power to speak is more than simply having a vocal box, it means having an opinion, having someone willing to listen, and being able to make the choice to open your mouth and speak. At the foundation of all of this is the capacity for reflection. For example, a young person or child who has been significantly impacted by trauma may be largely disengaged or have their identity hijacked by a single narrative (see section 3.2.5). The results of this lack of engagement have been dealt with in a variety of ways, including counselling methods designed to get individuals to recognize other narratives about themselves (practices that can be labelled with terms such as trauma-informed or narrative counselling) as well as numerous practices designed to help people develop the capacity to self-regulate (i.e. take control of their emotions).

Once a person is able to engage with multiple objects or multiple perspectives of self, that engagement allows for comparison, contrast, the application of competing narratives to a situation and

eventually the formation of opinions or preferences, ideas that can be expressed. And once an opinion is possible, a person has to have the agency or the opportunity to express it.¹⁶ As a kid, I remember how much it mattered when adults asked my opinion on things, either after church, or in school, or during a game. In particular, I remember how much I appreciated being asked for feedback during sports or in some of the youth programs that I was able to be a part of. In part this built up my willingness to speak, but it also lowered the bar to speaking, eventually allowing me to use my voice even when it wasn't explicitly being asked for.

Within this framework, then, an individual first develops the ability to engage, which then leads to the ability to form opinions. Then, as opportunities for engagement are encountered or provided, they gradually develop their agency and their own voice – they now have the power to speak.

4.2.1.1 Applied to language revitalization

Within the context of language revitalization there are a number of ways that learners can be supported in developing the power to speak. While counselling and directly helping individuals work through trauma and developing the initial capacity for reflection is ideally outside the wheelhouse of dedicated language workers, I do work to ensure that my language teaching helps students develop new skills and roles, providing protection against narratives that narrow students' understandings of themselves. Methods like Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) lend themselves well to this, as well as methods such as CILiftoff (Comprehensible Input¹⁷ Liftoff) which encourage having defined classroom

¹⁶ This contrast between having 'language' and having the capacity and opportunity to express yourself in it has been described as the difference between 'language' and 'voice' (McCarty et al., 2018, p. 161), with voice being linked to agency.

¹⁷ Comprehensible input is a concept from Stephen Krashen's (1981) theories of second language acquisition. He defines it as "input language in which the focus is on the message and not the form (p. 9). Comprehensible Input Liftoff (CILiftoff) (Hargaden, T., 2021) on the other hand is a method of language teaching built around a flexible curriculum, a range of easy-to-prep teaching materials, and a range of teaching and classroom management

responsibilities and roles, or Rediscovery programs that incorporate language into new roles as well as into activities that reinforce those roles. Keeping this goal in mind encourages me to try and structure my teaching around gained abilities and experiences, rather than simply gained knowledge, and also reminds me to engage in effective reflection with students. Saying this, I also try to ensure that my language teaching includes the learning of new knowledge, not merely new language knowledge, meaning that a unit that works as intended will give students new ways to engage with the world and their community.

Language learning is not always an easy domain to encourage speech, as the very subject matter is at times one of the obstacles that leads to disengagement, as learners stress over performance or think back to narratives about themselves as bad learners. My first way to reduce stress is to already know all my students for several years, and use their relationship with me to make what we are doing matter as I show that I care about what they are saying. Barring this pre-existing friendship (or in addition to this), when I've been faced with situations where my students don't view themselves as learners, I run classes that reset the narrative of the class. For example, rather than running a class that is heavily focused on practicing a pattern or memorizing a group of vocabulary (practices that while not so much a part of my practice today, definitely have been in the past) I might choose to do class outside, where our goal is to learn three or four names of plants while exploring in the woods around an old village site. My goal in this specific class is to center the class on a narrative of exploration as a team. In a following class I can now try to connect back to the previous activity strongly enough that students who struggle with seeing themselves as learners and commonly check out instead remain engaged because they're caught up in a new narrative of identity regarding what they are participating in.

techniques that gives students increased agency in their own learning.

Another way of addressing this type of disengagement is to provide engaging classes where the burden for participation is very low, yet the payoffs in terms of affirmation of learning ability are very clear – that is, instead of switching narratives, work at rewriting a narrative of learning. For me, this second approach is a strong part of a lot of the comprehensible input based classes that I teach, with students learning something in context, and me providing an opportunity for feedback (giving students a voice), where I have done the work to ensure that learners have the language to express the feedback, and I am already prepared to make it meaningful.

The work of ensuring that learners can give feedback and opinions can start at the earliest level (do you like this, or do you not like this? which one do you like better). I try to build even more personal engagement by finding ways to give real decisions to learners such as upcoming topics, destinations for trips, as well as taking similar steps in other programs. I will talk more about this last aspect –making someone’s speech meaningful – in the next section.

4.2.2 The context of speech

I stated that in having a narrative identity that supports wellness and well-being, individuals and communities are able to speak, in the presence of listeners, and within the context of real relationships. As a goal for action, this can be stated as follows: Communities and their members ensure that young people have opportunity to speak in contexts where people both listen to them, and care for them in the long term (i.e., in the context of real relationships). This goal can be broken up into the separate goals of providing opportunities, providing listeners, and building strong relationships, but I believe that the best way to achieve these goals is through building group cohesion – for example by focusing on improving relationships on a broader rather than narrower scale. I can word this as focusing on networks rather than pairs.

There's actually a formula that illustrates this quite well – the total number of people in a group, multiplied by those available for one person to form a relationship with (so a number one less than the population of the whole group) divided by 2 (the minimum number of people in a relationship). It doesn't necessarily model all possibilities, but, for example, in a group of 10 people, there are $(10 \times 9)/2 = 45$ relationships, rather than just five sets of two.

Building group cohesion is achieved through many different programs and activities: various outdoor adventure-based programs, sports programs, drama/improv programs, youth centers, family gatherings, all organized events that have multiple roles for people, and various forms of entertainment like dancing, as well as a lot of more potentially negative methods like partying or group use of alcohol or drugs. All of these events tend to lead to the creation of narratives that connect people together, not just in process, but also in goal or purpose.

Teachers for generations have worked on establishing practices like group projects, group reflection, group activities, all of which often face pushback from students who do not yet have strong relationships with their fellow students or teachers. In part this is because of narratives of individual accomplishment and competition that can be already present in elementary school, which can cause a constant tension.

One practice benefiting me during my own education was the use of multi-grade classrooms, where my relationships with my classmates had far more opportunities to grow, not just because of our age spread and range of experiences, but also because I had the same teacher through several years. This meant that when my father had a stroke, I was able to open up to my teacher-of-several-years about it. This continuity of relationship seems to be often present in things like alt-ed programs, but there is definitely space for it to be expanded and supported.

In my own time as a teacher, I've found that very small things can be instrumental in building relationships, things as simple as maintaining an awareness of student interests or experiences, and finding ways to let them know you know, for example by asking if they've done any more on a project, or telling a student that the subject of a class reminds you of an experience they previously shared with you about and so on. It doesn't take much to tell someone that they exist for you, and it doesn't take too many times before your presence can make the context of their speech more meaningful just because you have shown that they matter. Very similar practices are taught within models like the "trauma-informed school."¹⁸

Building these relationships in part can be supported also through the modeling of relationships on the part of families, mentors, and other community members. In order for this modeling to have results, there have to be opportunities where such relationships are on display, for example community or family events, or spaces for interaction between teaching staff with students present and engaged. But even the effectiveness of this modeling itself is still contingent on the same series of dependencies as was discussed in section 4.2.1 regarding the power to speak: in order to learn from the example of others, young people need to be able to engage. This engagement leads to not being hijacked by traumatic narratives, and also helps develop enough of an ability of reflection that they can evaluate relationships in terms of what they want or don't want. With this ability, they can then make their own relationships meaningful through their reflection on them.

4.2.2.1 Applied to language revitalization

Almost everything I've shared here can be directly applied to language programs without

¹⁸ One good reference for trauma-informed schools is Sporleder and Forbes' 2019 book *The trauma-informed school*.

modification. For example, any look through a list of possible improv activities will reveal dozens if not hundreds of activities that can easily be adapted for learning language, and because programs like this reinforce all aspects of relationship building, there are already games available that are designed to demand presence, building engagement, helping students connect to each other, and building relationships. Similarly, the gamification of these objectives means it is very easy to hand over to learners the skills required to facilitate these practices themselves.

Within these strengthening relationships, the next biggest influence you as a teacher or worker can have is in how you build your own relationships. I believe that in building these relationships, your most important tool is your knowledge of students. Taking advantage of opportunities early in the year to learn about students' hobbies, interests, background and family relationships can turn into meaningful connections later on simply by showing that you care enough to remember it later on. This process can be a lot easier if you take notes and review them once or twice in a year. Another way that you can make all of this easier both for yourself and for students, is through teaching in ways that involve a wide range of subjects or activities to engage with, for example by focusing on engaging content.

While these methods all have their own advantages, one very important advantage is that teaching around content makes it easier to differentiate between lessons and helps form memories of what students said and did, meaning that when you provide opportunities for reflection and speech, all participants, including you, will have an easier time recalling and bringing up previous actions or shared stories, further building the potential meaningfulness of the group and all of the existing relationships present. To put it in different terms, teaching/learning methods that increase the meaningfulness of a person you are interacting with will let you and others do a better job of making it clear that you all are good listeners, and care.

When I look at classes where I have taught the same group of kids for a number of years, I know that in the past I would attribute ongoing progress to the accumulation of knowledge, but increasingly I suspect (and see) that many of the things that allow one group of students to engage in more challenging tasks is more the accumulation of trust and relationship within the group than it is the accumulation of language skills (though that helps as well). I believe that creating this healthy, interconnected social context in my class, and by extension encouraging it in my community and in my own life is a necessary step in making my work sharing language a contributor to well-being.

4.2.3 Examples of speech

I stated that in having a narrative identity that supports wellness and well-being, young people have “ample examples of what using this voice looks like, and draw on these provided examples to speak meaningfully.” I can restate this as “Communities and their members work to ensure that young people don’t just have these opportunities to speak, they are also given many positive examples to guide their own speech. In conjunction with this, communities and their members work to ensure that the opportunities given are meaningful, or are rendered meaningful through how people respond.” In a framework focused on well-being, this can be realized in a variety of ways.

Based on what I have argued in chapters 2 and 3, I believe that the most important examples of speech are those that show a young person that they are cared for and that they matter. These are the relationship with parents, aunties, uncles, grandparents, siblings and friends. In looking at how peoples’ capacities for developing healthy identities have been eroded, I outlined how not just the examples but even the capacity for this type of example have been cut off through the taking away of very young children to residential schools. While the scope of parenting is well beyond anything I can touch on here, I will say that we see things like parenting classes, books, support groups, and more, all geared towards not just *how* we speak to our children, but also *what* we say. Speaking out of love, interest, or concern all

show a young person that they matter in the context of the speaker's world. And children know that an environment where you matter is a safe space, not in the highly criticized sense of safe from criticism or dissent, but rather a place that is rendered safe through not being dismissed.

A wide range of historical and ongoing practices have provided young people with healthy examples of using voice. Within Bella Coola, children have been regularly required to attend community meetings, and expected to pay attention to the discussion and decision-making processes (Amos Tallio, 2019, personal communication). Similarly, at larger governance events, there are explicit processes in place to guide children into participation. This starts with requiring children to sit with parents and pay attention while young, followed by being given the opportunity to put on their own play potlatches when older. There are then explicit ceremonies related to coming of age that bring with them meaningful conversation and visits from family members and other mentors, as well as expectations of participation in future community work.

Everything that has been talked about so far regarding both the capacity for engagement and reflection, as well as the role of listeners and others in making experiences meaningful applies here as well, and often all of this comes together in moments when the community at large feels the need to speak collectively. Youth participation in the Idle No More gatherings, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2-Spirit People (MMWG2) gatherings, and many other expressions of community agency have not only shown young people that their community has a voice, but also provide examples of speech. Furthermore, as people tell and retell the stories of these events, their own speech is placed within larger narratives of resistance and resurgence that can give individuals and their communities meaning and purpose, especially when this speech takes place in the context of a receptive community.

One of the challenges with such efforts is that they are not always successful, and do not always

result in young people being respected or listened to – one need only look at the Northern Gateway consultation process to find an example where everyone was given an opportunity to speak, and then collectively taught that their voices didn't matter. These challenges only increase the importance of being listened to at a local level. When my Métis Nation's politicians attended youth events, listened to us, but then focused their time in office on completely different concerns, we felt like disengaging from the organization. In contrast to this, when community youth in Bella Coola submitted a petition for a youth center the community very deliberately acted on it, as well as recognized those involved. Actions like these can serve as narratives that very easily can be passed down from one generation of young people to the next, building both capacity and resilience through providing hope.

4.2.3.1 Applied to language revitalization

There are many ways to apply these goals to language revitalization. One of the easiest ways to incorporate these examples of speech in a language class is to have practice speaking activities where the context is created for someone to say something meaningful. Something like communal storytelling, where each person takes the story one sentence further provide example after example of words mattering. Another similar example is by creating a context where students have the power to create laughter for example by giving improbable gifts or by using their creativity to give answers that can be deliberately very wrong – all of these give affirming reactions that give speech the power to cause action. Another way is through any type of a choice activity where the choice matters, even if the only way it matters is by having you go to one group or another group. This might seem to be more focused on enabling someone to speak meaningfully, but it's important to recognize that any activity done in a group gives one person the ability to speak, and everyone else an example, while the role of the teacher is to show that these choices are respected.

The second main way that I see is by ensuring that curriculum engages with stories of people

speaking. Once language learners reach even a low intermediate level it is very possible to tell stories of community leaders, or those who spoke up for others or themselves, and to reflect on them. In my bank of community stories I have a number of stories about young people speaking up about the importance of their language, with meaningful results, and all these stories can help others as they seek to integrate their voices into their identities.

A third way is by doing activities as a class where we make others' voices matter. For example, learning through surveying people in or out of the class about how something should be, then using the survey as a tool for creating more comprehensible language, finishing by acting on the survey. Another example could be polling students about their favourite animals, then using those animals in the next lesson. All of these things and many more let classes seek out and then respect the voices of others and their community. In addition, all of these practices reinforce relationships, and reinforce a narrative where others matter, and so do they.

4.2.4 Feedback loops and well-being as a journey

Looking at the process of developing our ability to make decisions and use our voice, I stated that "this identity reinforces the agency that powers this process," and that this process "builds on the sense of community in which it has been created." I can restate this by saying that supported reflection or meaningful response to those who speak helps reinforce a growing narrative identity that paints the individual as having agency, an agency that powers even further engagement with all facets of community. In addition, establishing routines of engagement builds an identity that is motivated to continue engaging, and which responds to the provided reflection and meaningful responses.

This isn't so much a call to action, primarily it is a call to a recognition that while well-being can be seen as a goal that we can always be getting closer to, it is also a state of engagement that is

constantly keeping us in movement directed towards that goal (even though at times life may be pushing us backwards). The focus is not so much on attaining perfection, but rather on maintaining and growing the ability to stay engaged in the face of setbacks as well as successes. Resilience is often defined as the ability to both deal with stressful situations and also recover quickly afterwards; I believe that a person in this positive state of engagement will be both resilient in the face of setbacks, and developing further resilience during good times. And embracing this perspective of well-being as an ongoing way of approaching life should have a range of impacts on our practices.

Within education, we have a long history of creating categories of learners, for example visual versus auditory, self-motivated versus not. While these categories may reflect truths in the moment, what often happens is that these types of observations of a specific moment in time become labels that struggle with reflecting changing situations and growth. The prevalence of categorizing learners this way can either be because of perspectives on nurture vs nature that are more geared towards deterministic answers, or it can be because many of our educational endeavours are increasingly snap-shotted in time as we move from multi-year mentorships to single-grade teachers or single-semester teachers at the college or university level. Similar pressures face healthcare, as fewer and fewer individuals have family doctors and instead rely on short visits to deal with long-term issues, hoping for a surgical solution to lifestyle challenges, or a prescription that can deal with emotional challenges.

Resisting these categorizing perspectives is made difficult for a number of reasons. While philosophical considerations at times play a role (such as deterministic worldviews regarding either health or culture) it seems very clear in my own experience that financial or structural considerations can be the biggest challenge. Jurisdictions seem to universally lament the decrease in family doctors, and school teachers and districts seem to broadly recognize that multi-grade classrooms or having support staff follow cohorts are beneficial ideas, but hiring more doctors and more teachers is a big challenge,

especially when not everybody understands the benefits.

In counselling or psychology as well there have been efforts to conceptualize well-being as a journey, for example the work of Kazimierz Dobrowski¹⁹, who conceptualizes much of what we see as being dysregulated or mental imbalances as being necessary developmental steps along a path of developmental progress. From this perspective, things like depression and anger are understood to be types of disruption or reformulation of existing narratives, or as an interrogation of self that takes place as individuals are preparing to move toward further integration of challenging narratives into their developing identities. Perspectives like this push people to recognize the importance of an engaged journey, especially in light of the understanding that is lost when the perspective is reduced to the current state without reference to change over time or level of engagement.

Once wellness or well-being is recognized as a journey, then goals cease to have limits – for example rather than a goal of having love in your life, you can have a goal of increasing the love in your life. Instead of a goal of “acquiring language” you can have a goal of increasing your skill at expressing yourself in your language. While there might be a minimum bound below which there is not enough of something, for all of these components of an agentive, grounded practice, there is no real upper bound, simply an increasing body of relationships which can support resilience. In addition, in a viewpoint of wellness as a journey, it becomes easier to conceive of all the separate influences such as agency, opportunity, good listening, effective examples, as being ongoing supports that constantly feed in to an ever-growing identity which in turn gives back, rather than as a static pyramid or ladder of supports. This recognition has important implications for language teaching.

¹⁹ To learn more about Dobrowski, you can read Sal Mendaglio’s 2008 book *Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration*, though it’s also worthwhile to start with the Wikipedia entry on Positive Disintegration.

4.2.4.1 Applied to language revitalization

Many of the language textbooks or classroom practices I have encountered as a learner or a teacher do not reflect this perspective of learners as humans in growth and resilience, instead by and large perceiving them (or at least addressing them) as static combinations of skills and abilities, with parallel unchanging collections of affective factors that must be dealt with and worked around. Certain types of books target self-directed learners, while others try to help teachers engage with passive ones. Some methods assume engagement on the part of students and are designed for teachers to give as much agency as possible to learners, while others bypass affective challenges on the part of both learners and teachers by focusing on direct commands and responses. Conflicts over methods and resources are simplified when they are thought of in terms of where these methods work best along a journey towards resilience and well-being (see Figure 1). When learners and teachers simply ask which ones work best, there are different answers depending on a wide range of factors such as where either the student or the teacher is in their own journey. As a result, questions related to goals *within* a method or the ways in which we alter practices or work towards other practices and methods can be overlooked.

Figure 1*Viewing Learners as being on a Journey*

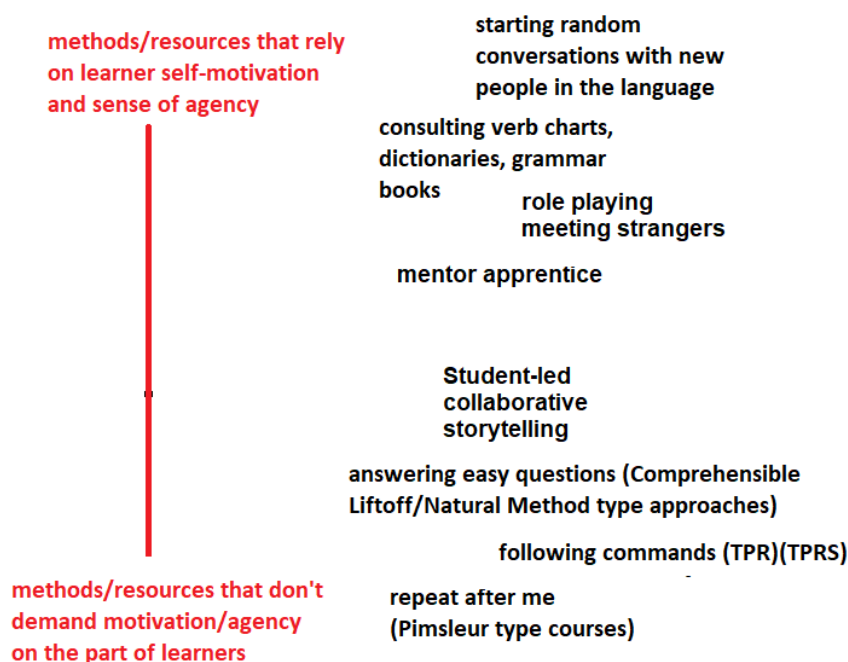
Note. Rather than viewing learners as fixed clusters of attributes, I am instead viewing them as being on a journey towards increased agency and capacity.

While it's true that historically much of education has been influenced by perspectives that see human personality and temperament as being largely unchanging, I don't think this is the primary reason for this state. When I read books on teaching methodology, I do see a significant awareness of the role of learner agency, for example as a tool for increasing engagement within various teaching methods such as TBLT, or as a necessary part of learners solving the creative problems involved in understanding and intuiting different or complex grammar. I suspect that one of the main reasons for this is that for many teachers, the duration of a relationship between teacher and student may only last the duration of a single course, or if couched in a university program, perhaps a maximum of two or three years. During this time significant changes to a learner's sense of agency and grounding might not

be apparent, especially if that is not a clarified focus for assessment.

In the multi-year, even multigenerational context of language revitalization, however, ignoring the changing nature of learners, especially when learners are undertaking language learning specifically in order to help themselves progress in this journey, means missed opportunities and disappointment. This is especially true in the context of community pressure that learners eventually become teachers and mentors themselves – without a focus on growth, learners often reach the end of their schooling without having built the confidence to take steps towards becoming teachers, even when their linguistic knowledge is more than sufficient. Teachers who themselves are unsure and not comfortable taking risks are likely to gravitate towards teaching methods that work for them, which might engage students, but not necessarily develop their sense of agency. A good example of this is basic Total Physical Response (TPR)²⁰, which is very good at engaging students, but in its basic formulation only has limited space for encouraging creativity and decision making. In Figure 2 you can see a few examples of different methods roughly categorized based on level of agency demanded of learners and teachers, though each method can be implemented in a way that is student-led to a greater or lesser degree, or which encourages students (and teachers) to expand their comfort zones in new ways.

²⁰ Total Physical Response is a method for teaching language that as much as possible connects language to physical responses, for example by following increasingly complex commands. It was developed by James Asher, and tends to be quite good for introducing vocabulary, and for building student understanding of language without too much anxiety, as students often are following directions as a group.

Figure 2*Methods or Resources Arranged by Agency*

Note. a rough visual of the relative demands on agency, and corresponding opportunities to develop agency, present in a few common methods. This is only relative, as many teachers do a wide range of adaptations to all these methods to allow for a much wider range of engagement and agency with each method.

Once teachers have recognized that their students are on a journey towards more agency and greater well-being, we can then plan for success. We can evaluate our teaching methods in terms of how much agency they demand of, or provide for, our students. After this evaluation, we can use what we know to build up the agency of our students in meaningful ways until they are capable of engaging with even more engaging methods (or minor adaptations of methods), and until as teachers, we are likewise comfortable in our ability to mentor students into that level of engagement. Given that most teaching

methods are not really levelled in terms of agency, this engagement will likely involve a range of practices, each of which may have to be modified as needed. A few specific examples will be included throughout chapter 5. This process of increasing opportunity leading to increasing agency, leading to increased capacity for opportunity which is then provided, leading to increased agency, is an important positive feedback loop that benefits both learners and teachers as they work towards building capacity and perspective.

Relevant practices that can support this cycle might include things like keeping track and remembering the accomplishments of students from previous years in order to remind people of their abilities (something that I see done in our school's dance program when we re-watch videos of old performances). Another practice that needs to be stated out loud is to maintain high expectations for your students regardless of where they currently find themselves along this journey. Recognizing well-being as a journey, agency as a journey, can give you hope regarding students who are not engaging, hope that you need in order to maintain expectations in the face of significant challenges.

4.2.4.2 Feedback loops involve everyone

There is another part of such feedback loops that is important to consider. Much of what I just discussed looks at the learning environment as if it is a function of mentor/teacher behaviour and relationships, but the majority of the relational space, and all decisions regarding engagement, are filled with learner motivations and relationships. The same principle that applied to examples of speech, namely that building group dynamics has an exponentially greater impact than solely focusing on one-on-one contexts, also applies to building engagement and learner willingness to express agency. Planning for success includes helping learners incorporate practices of engagement into their identities.

Sometimes I think of engagement as being “provided” or “encouraged” but the reality is that

things like motivation, engagement, and the expression of agency are exclusively learner-side decisions, which a mentor or teacher can only support or encourage. And like other decisions, they are a part of routines, and can become habits or narratives that can be internalized into both day-to-day unthinking behaviour as well as into one's narrative identity. With this in mind, then, fostering the growth of self-motivation for engagement can also be approached through story, practice, and social context. In a classroom context, routines normalizing building connections can include things like secret friends, making crafts for gifts, helping younger kids, or sharing food. Language teaching activities that I have seen or heard of people doing include doing construction as a group for elders (with a pre-teach of the language needed), doing housework (as part of the mentor-apprentice program) or making encouraging cards for both each other (very important!) and family members. All of these activities or methods will help develop habits of engagement.

My favourite classroom approach to fostering attitudes involves improv activities (though there are other methods that I prefer on the land). Improv comedy activities in general are focused on building group connections, normalizing engagement with the present and with each other, and many of the activities can easily be adapted for language teaching. To give just one example, there's an activity where the group makes a circle, then one person mimes giving a gift. The receiver has to quickly thank the giver, but have to include *what* they are thankful for – “thank you for the elephant!” and so on. You are both doing things for each other, thinking on your feet, staying present, and using language fairly spontaneously. I've previously written far more extensively regarding the cross-over principles between improv comedy and ways of engaging elders in language documentation (McCreery, 2015), and just as much if not more could be written about the use of these types of deliberate activities in language teaching.

I can summarize all this as follows. In this journey towards well-being, as a teacher I first need to

see the journey for what it is before I can start personally supporting engagement in my teaching and in my relationships. This support can involve adapting my already established teaching methods and techniques, as well as adopting new ones. Secondly, through a wide range of activities, we can actively support young people in normalizing practices of engagement with each other and with the class, and in incorporating these practices into identity. As incorporation progresses, the relationships that develop support engagement (or at least don't encourage disengagement), and provide motivation that allows for the more successful use of practices that could feel risky to classes with less cohesion. I will give more examples of applying these goals and principles in chapter 5.

4.2.5 Telling stories of resilience and well-being

Almost everything that has been talked about so far is focused on the creation of relationships and connections. The vehicle for connections that has the potential to tie the most different disparate elements of our lives together is narrative or story. As a result, especially within the context of narrative identity, how we use narratives becomes a topic in and of itself that in many ways overlays and expands on questions such as the power to speak or appropriate contexts. Looking at the role of narratives in the pursuit of well-being, I stated in section 2.3 that "This identity guides people in telling stories using content and practices that frame themselves as resilient by redeeming negative experiences and building on agency and relationships with people and place." Restated as actionable goals and slightly expanded it can read as follows:

Communities and their members provide young people with many examples of positive narratives that frame experiences in positive ways, for example by including agency, meaning-making, self-exploration, coherent resolution, and communion. Furthermore, communities and their members maintain practices that invite and guide participation in this narration.

In discussing these objectives, I will first look at the practices communities use to populate the lives of young people with positive stories, then share some thoughts surrounding the choices we make around what stories to tell or prioritize, and then conclude with more thoughts looking further at how this can be directly applied to language revitalization beyond what I will have already discussed.

4.2.5.1 Placing stories into positive practice

The main vehicle for the provision of positive narratives to young people is through giving examples, as adults share their stories with each other and with young people. Practices such as ceremonies that have a sharing component tend to both provide examples of challenges facing people, but also place those challenges in the context of community action to deal with them. Community gatherings where people deal with problems and work towards goals allow for discussion and resolution of problems within the context of assumed agency (otherwise why gather?). Ideally these community initiatives result in community effort (implying communion) and result in coherent resolution to narratives with an understandable narrative path from start to finish. When young people are the centre of such ceremonies and are guided in playing a central role in the meaning being made for the community, they have an easier time internalizing the positive narratives.

Building on such examples, many communities run youth programs such as Rediscovery International or various summer programs which involve young people in decision making roles, with regular reflection on events and decisions a part of daily or evening routines. This reflection provides examples from older staff and other mentors of how to frame a series of events into a coherent, meaningful whole, as well as providing a context for young people to themselves engage in meaning making.

Building on and talking place simultaneous to these programs are the myriad of other

opportunities communities create in which to share meaningful stories such as any commemoration, any memorial, any regular gathering or activities including singing, dancing, or sports. All of these give contexts that, in line with everything that has been talked about previously in this chapter, help make communication and sharing meaningful and impactful on identity, with these contexts also having a similar positive influence on stories that are told at or arise from these events. And in addition to the reflection and overarching narratives of such events or programs, such events also provide meaningful and impactful opportunities for stories of all kinds to be shared, providing us an additional opportunity to share meaningful stories in a positive social context.

Communities provide stories outside of these contexts as well. For example, stories can be shared through local radio, with the stories made meaningful through the charisma and relationships shared on air with hosts and guests, and with the venue of radio made more meaningful through ongoing community outreach and engagement with the previously mentioned community events.

Simply sitting around and sharing stories is a similarly valuable activity in how it provides meaningful examples and context. Many traditional genres of stories tend to have a number of positive qualities built into them, and all seem to invite responses on the part of the listeners. Stories of animal encounters tend to include admissions of fear and openness about missteps leading to the incident, stories of accidents likewise tend to include humility and often frame things as a learning experience, and all of these both provide direct examples to younger people, while also inviting listeners to respond with their own stories, in addition to giving healthy frameworks within which to interpret later experiences. These and similar genres of storytelling become vehicles for education, reflection, and growth, as well as being self-perpetuating, something that will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

My emphasis of “genres of storytelling” rather than genres of story is important in that it

highlights that what I am talking about above is better thought of as various practices of storytelling rather than just the use of relevant content in specific contexts. Jo-ann Archibald (2008, Chapter 6) shares stories of both failure and success surrounding the use of stories in teaching, giving examples in which one teacher sharing a story without sufficient background context met with student pushback, while a different teacher was able to present a story orally, combined with several layers of reflection (discussed further in 4.2.6). The storyteller in this situation, Lorna Mathias, after reflecting on the process, realized that she had a “responsibility, as the teacher, to increase her own understanding both of the nature of First Nations stories . . . and of their purposes for teaching and learning” (Archibald, 2008, p. 133). Students respected engaging storytelling styles (*ibid.*, p. 132), which for me suggests that what they appreciated was a sense that the storyteller had a connection to what was being shared, a sense of connection that in my experience can be conveyed in a wide variety of ways, though being a skilled storyteller is always helpful.

The above practices are just a few examples of many ways in which positive examples and practices can be and are built into community, but there is also another side – negative narratives and practices that take us in the wrong direction. How to wrestle with such narratives and practices is not always an easy decision, and in many situations is best dealt with indirectly. For example, many First Nations communities, when dealing with increased suicide risk among young people, have chosen to focus on promoting protective factors rather than trying to minimize risk factors, as one strength can deal with a multitude of different weaknesses. In a similar vein while discussing similar issues, one of my friends who is a martial arts instructor has told me repeatedly that the best way to deal with a bad habit is through practicing the good habits, not through focusing on the wrong. That said, one of the ways we practice those good habits is through community discussion of topic, through community telling of healthy narratives, and within these positive practices there definitely is space for building healthy

narratives that stand in direct opposition to the most damaging and negative narratives and practices. These opportunities are especially rich in situations where the work going on is very domain specific (such as language revitalization). Establishing healthy narratives around the work, especially narratives that include communion and agency, can provide paths forward to both success with language and towards greater well-being. And when this work of establishing healthy narratives also involves engagement with opposing viewpoints, it also becomes a vehicle for encouraging self-reflection. In addition, doing this work at a community level becomes another way to reinforce narratives of community agency.

4.2.5.1.1 Applied to language revitalization

There are a number of ways that these considerations can have an impact on how we pursue language revitalization; the following list is intended to be illustrative, not comprehensive. First, keeping the use of story and narrative in mind highlights the potential impact of projects that bring language into ceremonies, sports, or any other regular events, events that themselves consist of meaningful narratives. Not only is language regularly used in these contexts, but using language also gets visible community support. This support can range from set language surrounding set portions of events, to far more creative uses of language such as planning or calling plays in basketball or hockey. This isn't language used in narrative per se, however, it is language used in a way that will make any resulting narratives significantly more meaningful, and inclusive of language. Doing problem resolution and discussing challenges is well outside the language ability of most of my learners, but expressing agreement to such a decision is not, and little things like this can have a real impact on attitudes towards language.

Programs like Rediscovery can not only incorporate language, but can also be used as platforms for effective language camps with language learning layered onto the pre-existing program. While initially we might not do recaps of the day in the language, we can use easily acquired language skills to

focus everyone on the moment at hand, to share our emotional connection, and to encourage each other. These all become a part of meaningful, agentive practices, helping to create a positive narrative of what speaking a language implies.

When it comes to actually telling stories in a target language, again there are several useful practices that come to mind. One practice would be using the target language to tell the stories at the core of meaningful events, especially in situations where the story is already known to the audience (even if not known in the target language). Some years ago at our last pre-covid school potlatch, students shared the introductory stories to our dances in Nuxalk, and the moment was so powerful that a) I was encouraged by it enough to continue as a teacher at a time when I was feeling pessimistic about it, b) the students eventually found the process meaningful enough that they actually were teaching the stories they had learnt to other students who had learnt different ones, and c) I have since heard from two other nations that after attending our potlatch they began helping their young people to do the same thing. The sharing of these stories became such a meaningful moment, that I now even tell this story about the telling of stories (storyception?).

Another technique is to focus on stories that describe regular events, such as short trips to designated places, and incorporate them into reflection on this type of journey, be it a field trip or part of a program. In a classroom, sometimes my goal is to make the events of the day meaningful, so at the close of the day I could do a picture recap accompanied by a group-telling of what happened as we look at our pictures. Having regular schedules and routines can greatly simplify this work as well, as it means that language and resources created can be easily reused day after day. Whatever methods we use, we can focus on making the context of the telling meaningful, a goal that can be worked towards in a wide variety of ways, either through increasing the relevance of the story, or through building on the connections students feel with the moment in which the telling takes place, layering it with routines,

with relationships, or with other stories tied to the place, relationships, or activity.

All of the above methods seem to build more engagement if the storytelling teacher is able to directly engage with students while simultaneously telling the story. One implication of this is that teachers who make an effort to learn stories and reflect on them themselves will have an easier time using them for a whole range of purposes. This also means that if the goal is to pass these abilities on to learners, they have to also be given examples of and opportunities to tell stories that they are engaged with. I believe that this could also be helped by having clear discussions with learners about the different ways we can engage with stories, including looking at what is important and meaningful to each learner.

Explicitly learning about the structure of stories can also be a good way to develop learners' abilities to both tell stories as well as their abilities to layer stories into their own lives and activities. For example, in the past I have provided students with bullet-form outlines of stories that someone is about to tell, and given them the responsibility of taking down notes. Following this type of activity, we've looked at other stories in the same genre and compared structures. The ideas behind doing comparisons include making it easier for students to learn and remember more stories – a stated goal for many of them – and helping students get more comfortable telling their own stories.

There is also the question of how we address negative narratives of the type discussed above. As students get older, they grow away from simply absorbing whatever is taught, instead developing attitudes and opinions on the value or worth of different subjects and bodies of knowledge in their lives. These attitudes are often reflections of broader community or societal narratives, and can be quite negative or harmful, both for themselves and for community goals regarding well-being or resurgence. Currently I seem to deal with student pushback on a piecemeal basis, addressing issues as they become disruptive, but an obvious suggestion would be to approach this challenge pre-emptively, sharing

important positive narratives regarding what language is and why we learn it at a younger age. However, like many other efforts to change public opinion, this type of an education campaign needs to target the whole community, so that children stop absorbing the negative attitudes at home. Simply ensuring that language learning and language use are placed in positive contexts that incorporate reflection and identity building can go a long way to providing a counterpoint to negative narratives regarding language. Still, a counterpoint is only effective if it is reflected on, which for me highlights the importance of engagement with various topics in addition to always doing our best to ensure healthy environments for young people, with engagement followed by the telling of our stories being the most effective of all.

4.2.5.2 what stories do we tell?

I've struggled with how to make the following discussion brief, given that the use of narrative and the presentation of worldview is one of my passions for research and thought. I've had twenty-page drafts that just deal with this topic, then fully cut them intending to talk about it in a later work, but I keep having to return to it because the discussion is unavoidably important.

The idea that sharing stories – our stories – is central to the work of language revitalization is not new. While I have found very little if any reference to the use of narrative and story within various textbooks on language education, and similarly no contextually relevant references within discussions or descriptions of language acquisition approaches or methodologies, this is not my experience when engaging with communities. Some years ago, I was involved in a consultation process with BC's Ministry of Education regarding language curriculum, a consultation process that had representatives from many of the First Nations' schools in British Columbia. One of the takeaways from the process was that every nation felt that their stories should obviously play an important if not central role in language revitalization.

My own family provided me with a lot of stories, which, like those stories passed down in most families, have been important in my life as I interpret and give meaning to life. The specific stories shared gave me *specific* ways of interpreting, and prioritize some meanings over others, and they reflected an effort on the part of my community to help me avoid specific negative directions. To give an example, telling a story that locks you into a life-long feud is definitely meaningful, but not necessarily the best way to gain actual agency over your path. Because of this, all communities tell stories that are designed to give children scripts to follow in difficult situations, or character slots to place themselves into when trying to make meaning of things that have happened.

Growing up I remember my mother telling me stories of leading a class revolt against a teacher she felt was molesting a fellow student, or of how my grandmother would stand up for my grandfather when he faced racism at restaurants or hotels. I remember stories of my aunts advocating for people who were being ignored, and was told that I too should not be afraid to speak up when need. These stories told me that it was my responsibility to show that people mattered. They didn't help me not be afraid, but they did give me expectations, and as time went on, the expectations have stuck.

I don't know the answer to the question of whether the values in the stories were the reason my family told them, or if we gravitated towards making these experiences into stories because they resonated with our values, but I suspect the answer is a good dose of both. What I can confidently say is that a multi-generational process resulted in a specific body of stories being passed down to me, and that these stories shaped my worldview. They also served a range of needs, including empowering me, helping me make sense of my place in the world, assisting me with self-exploration (through responding to these stories), providing me with examples of coherently resolved narratives, and building communion through the explicit implication that these stories were also my stories, as well as the stories of my siblings and even my cousins.

This work of curating narratives is done by whole communities as well as by families. For example, in chapter 1 (sections 1.2.3 and 1.6.1) I presented some of the narratives or at least summaries of narratives that shaped goals and perspectives on well-being for both my Métis nation and my adopted community – narratives that these communities chose to pass down because they reflected their values and aspirations. I also outlined some of the ways in which the transmission of these narratives has been negatively impacted, leading to a lot of loss (see section 3.2). In response to this loss, many communities can no longer take for granted the unsupported passing on of these narratives and practices, and have had to undertake intentional work around stories. This work includes compiling stories from a range of sources including elders, deciding how to use them, and then actively supporting those uses.

What form this work takes, what methods and projects define it, will depend on the community. For example, looking at the Métis nation, there have been large projects led by provincial organizations and publishers, as well as various collections of stories compiled by individual communities. Other independent writers have compiled thousands of stories related to Métis history, and academic scholars and thinkers have engaged in a lot of meaningful historiography and analysis with the goal of helping emerging generations develop identities grounded on our stories. For me, the most impactful work has been done by Métis who have chosen to tell their own stories. Books like *Halfbreed* by Maria Campbell (1973) or *Walking in the Woods: A Métis Memoir* by Herb Belcourt (2017) tell us that we can tell our own stories ourselves; they tell us that we have agency both to tell our stories and to make meaning through them. Métis voices continue to engage in meaning making on countless Facebook pages, radio stations, as well as through our political structures and institutions, however flawed they may be. The one area that seems to have far less engagement, at least in contrast to many other nations, is with the stories that historically were the backbone of our storytelling traditions, those stories labelled as *âtayôhkêwina* / *lii kooñt* or *acimowinisa* / *lii zistwer* in Cree or Michif, traditions that have fallen away as our stories and

practices have changed to reflect new and pressing challenges.

In Bella Coola similarly a wide range of methods and practices have played a part in supporting healthy transmission of stories. Some of my coworkers have shared how their parents would make every supper story time. At other times, the community has run weekly storytelling gatherings for young people. Since its establishment in 2014, Nuxalk Radio has also been instrumental in sharing Nuxalk traditional stories, stories of Nuxalk history and resistance, as well as ensuring that Nuxalk people continue to be the ones shaping their own narratives today. Informal storytelling as well continues, with many individuals priding themselves on their knowledge of stories, especially in the context of the land and place. Books have been published as well, in particular Nuxalk elder Clayton Mack shared both a collection of the stories passed down to him in *Bella Coola man: More stories of Clayton Mack* (1994), but also equally important, shared the stories of his own life in *Grizzlies and white guys: The stories of Clayton Mack* (1993), in which he showed how community values and narratives helped him function in a changing world. It was also in this book that he shared what I view as his most important contribution – a wide range of examples of an inherently self-reflective storytelling practice (which I will discuss more in section 6.1.3). Crucially, a lot of discussion about what stories to use and how to use them have been taking place because of institutions the community has established such as Acwsalcta school or the Traditional Governance office. The discussions ongoing within these institutions have had a significant influence on the stories I structure my language teaching around, and ongoing work in this direction is slowly influencing how other subjects are taught as well.

Jo-ann Archibald in her book *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit* describes her experience with the process in the context of creating provincial curriculum built around Indigenous stories related to justice (Archibald, 2008, p. 101). While being clear on the importance of story, Archibald also establishes ways in which stories can be used beyond their local context and

become vehicles for broader engagement, for example in the growing community of Indigenous researchers or in the creation of curriculum targeting broader population groups. She does this by emphasizing the ways in which the practices of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence can be understood and applied, as researchers or writers work to create the context within which stories can be shared while creating and maintaining the relationships within which storytellers create their stories. In reviewing what I have written in this thesis, I realize that in many ways these questions have been something I have been able to sidestep slightly because I have been focusing on using local stories within a local context where the sense of connection to the storyteller can be easily established. But Archibald and others since have shown that this type of respect and acceptance of responsibility within relationship can support Indigenous stories in becoming tools of transformation beyond these borders and in to the realm of Province-wide curriculum.

One of the ongoing challenges with all of this work is that the context of our lives is in constant change, and stories that help us in one context are not necessarily helpful or even comprehensible in a different context. To give one example of this type of a changing context, the Métis nation went through a significant shift in context towards the end of the nineteenth century. We went from being the people who owned ourselves, living the life that was the context of our birth, to going through losing our land, our food, our respect, and much more. The challenges of life changed overnight from going through the work of thriving within the context of relationships we had built, to surviving in a new world devoid of many of the resources we had previously relied upon, living in poverty with few rights and little respect. In talking with many of my Métis friends, we've realized that we were raised on stories that almost exclusively come from after this shift, stories that help us deal with the dark times, helping us understanding our messed-up parents, and giving us the strength and hope to work for a future.

As times have changed and we continue telling stories, we find that the stories of this period of

time, the stories we've been given, are no longer enough. Preoccupations with survival are giving way to questions about how to live when survival is no long the primary concern. For some this shift in focus means searching out new stories, new identities, sometimes even stepping away from a Métis identity. For me it has meant a deep interest in rediscovering the stories our nation told prior to that first shift, stories that expressed values and skills needed when times were good. My life is profoundly different from that of my grandparents, and while I love their stories as they give me understanding of them and our history, I want my children to have more. As a result, I have to maintain both practices of sharing stories and also practices of reflection and discussion in order for our repertoire of stories to grow and embed itself in a changing context.

For communities trying to bring back damaged practices surrounding story creation and telling, this challenge regarding maintaining meaningfulness in the face of changed context is constant. Telling stories from one culture to people brought up largely in another always presents challenges. In the case of bringing back traditional stories put to text a century ago – often by outside observers ignorant of meaning even then – results are often so devoid of context that the first response is simply “so what?” Not only is the cultural context and the linguistic context absent, the various possible intents and uses of stories are not only not understood, but not thought about, meaning it's very common for traditional stories to be used simply as signifiers of culture and identity rather than as functioning narratives in an identity, much as language can become a signifier rather than a practice. Just to give one example of a dislocated story, the current textbook *BC First Nations Studies* (Campbell, Menzies & Peacock, 2003) uses a Nuxalk *smayusta* (a genre discussed in section 1.6.1) as an example of a trickster tale (ibid., p. 217). It's nice to see it there, and the textbook does ask students to reflect on what may have been lost in translation, but the reality is that when removed from the context of governance, the establishment of practices and family relations, the story feels almost meaningless, something that can happen to many

stories. This incongruity is especially true when these stories were once the very heart of an entire system of education, but are now being shoehorned piecemeal into a different educational system, in total contrast with the very careful incorporation of stories into curriculum discussed by Archibald (2008, Chapter 5) in which storytellers and communities work respectfully together with educators, a practice that can ensure that stories are told in ways that support agreed upon goals. Re-contextualization is not impossible, but it will require a lot of thought and a lot of work, two commodities that our education system does not always provide, and as such successfully implementing even a good selection of stories usually requires broader community assistance.

These challenges with contextualization help understand *why* Métis communities have shifted away from what were once our traditional stories to memoirs and other stories that are easily contextualized in the struggles and dislocation of the recent past – the contextualization is clear and engagement is natural. The values of engagement and humour within our traditional storytelling *practices* have encouraged maintaining relevance over conservatism, and as a result it is our storytelling practices with values of engagement attached that seem to still be surviving rather than many specific stories.

On the other hand, for many of the communities that are involved in the work of linguistic reclamation and resurgence within British Columbia, when communities speak of traditional stories, they mean the body of older traditional stories. This is in part because of cultural realities of connections between story and family, and story and place. The fact that most Indigenous communities in British Columbia have not been completely displaced from their traditional territory and traditional ways of being also plays a role in these stories being upheld, though that is far from the only reason. In Bella Coola the need to tell and contextualize stories of the recent past has been less obvious because of the ready presence of older stories. The power and salience of these stories has in part been a result of the

strong relationships the community has with elders who grew up in the world of these stories, but as the last of that generation of leaders have passed away, it is no longer possible to take that power and salience for granted, especially with young students who have never met or had any personal connection with these elders. Suddenly, in order for those stories to be relevant, the stories and relationships in between matter, the stories that give meaning to their community's journey over the past century and give context for understanding and appreciating previous generations. This importance of stories is also noted by Archibald (2008), who in her discussion of the creation and then implementation of curriculum is careful to talk about both "traditional and life-experience stories" (p. 106) as she outlines a practice of explaining thematic content.

In summary, the answer to the question of which stories to use is that while different communities might prioritize different stories, the utility of stories depends on both the practices the stories are embedded in, and on the extent to which the stories have been grounded in relationships, often through other stories. As discussed in the previous section, embedding stories in family and community practices that give agency and encourage meaning making will make all stories more impactful on identity. Our choices of stories can give even more agency and meaning making through building connections to community, through giving context to practices, and through giving context or connection to yet other stories with their own strengths.

4.2.5.3 Applied to language revitalization

There are many ways that wrestling with the question of what stories to tell can have an impact on how we pursue language revitalization. One of my responses as an educator has been to engage with the entire corpus of stories of my community in order to understand its worldview, including perspectives on well-being. This response has been followed by trying to make this corpus available to other staff and students in our school, but with enough context and direction included for easy

engagement both by staff looking for something appropriate and for students searching for something that connects with them. Currently we have a few hundred stories, sometimes with multiple versions, available typed out in a wiki, accompanied by comments, and accessible through various pages that categorize them based on genre, location, or even emotional competency targeted. These range from origin stories to songs to stories of community members' close calls and how they and their families responded. Having this body of stories as a resource has helped me find stories that build on students' knowledge and interests, as well as develop better long-term plans for being able to make other stories equally meaningful, and I hope will eventually allow better use and integration of the community's stories within education.

Moving on from resources to specific uses of stories in my teaching practice, these discussions have different implications for different ages and competency levels. At a beginner level, I can often use stories in my teaching, but it can be very hard to make stories meaningful, simply because of vocabulary constraints. Low hanging fruit are things like including character reactions (he liked it / he felt bad about that) and asking students' emotional responses to what happens. At other times, I will try to get students comfortable with using language to reflect and express their own thoughts and feelings in Nuxalk, and then find ways to have students share personal experiences in English, then use Nuxalk to respond. Both of these parallel goals – the use of stories and response to them, are heavily reflected in my choices of vocabulary and structures for my first few weeks of teaching preschool, as can be seen in section 5.3, reviewing appendix 2. Through all of this, my overarching goal of building students' capacity to benefit from effective processing techniques and healthy narratives drives my decision to use stories, as well as how I use them.

At levels somewhat beyond beginner, I can ask questions in Nuxalk about peoples' experiences, then recast them back in the form of stories, using this back-and-forth to both show that students

matter in class, and that their life can be told in different ways. Using this technique, I can draw out stories, or descriptions, or any number of varieties of text. As students get even more competent, I can have them prepare their own stories for consumption by others, and in order to show them that it's real, I can give them stories to read that come from students in higher grades or previous years. Having students create illustrations or take pictures of themselves to illustrate stories and concepts in class can add new layers of meaning, and knowing that their work will be used by others adds new relationships to the process.

As language abilities increase, things like free-reading become possible, and stories from a wide range of genres can be made available to learners. I can introduce new genres and subject matter and cater to my students' varied interests.

Earlier I talked about the importance of elders' stories of the recent past. One thing that makes them what they are is the humility and the frankness of the telling. While I as a teacher can retell these same stories, giving examples of the trusting openness and humility of somebody else is not the same as doing it yourself. This means that telling our *own* stories as teachers is also going to be essential as we model what we want for our students. This realization can lead to projects such as ones I've done with adult learners – having them share a core story of their identity, working together to retell it in Nuxalk, then learning to understand it in the language or even tell it. Given enough time with students and enough work to maintain a healthy environment, this level of openness can result in just coming to class becoming one of those healthy practices into which we want to put our learning.

In addition to all these stories told to be meaningful in the moment, at times I am willing to tell stories that I can make meaningful for students in one way, know that later on I will be trying to make that story matter for an entirely different reason, for example doing stories relevant to a fieldtrip

location, but later using the same story in discussing an animal's behaviour and lifeways, or in discussions of difficult situations we or our friends find ourselves in.

In summary, the use of story in language teaching should complement the use of story in the school, which should complement the use of story in the community, all of which should be preparing young people for meaningful engagement with a developing identity that can support their well-being. Because of the nature of language teaching, at times teachers are forced to be the ones wrestling with the decision of what stories students learn, and the more frames of reference you have to help you in your decisions the easier it can be. That said, just because a teacher's position forces wrestling with these issues, for these questions to be addressed in a way that is meaningful to the whole community means communities engaging with them themselves, developing an understanding of their needs and providing ongoing input to teachers. Engaged communities and engaged cultural workers are essential, especially in times of cultural disruption.

4.2.6 Self-exploration and reflection

Summarizing in chapter two, I state that an identity supporting wellness and well being would “[push young people] to *continue* engaging in meaning making and self-exploration as exemplified by the rest of the community that supported them in developing their own voice to begin with, resulting in life-long reflection and engagement with multiple narratives.” I would like to restate the first portion of this as follows:

As young people begin to find identity in these practices, and comfort in these activities, communities and their members support young people in establishing life-long practices of engaging in the various roles provided in their community, roles in which they are supported in using their creativity, their agency and their voice meaningfully.

And the second part like this:

And through engagement in a wide range of activities, they are able to develop lifelong practices of critical thinking, reflection and self-reflection in the context of multiple narratives.

I will look at these components separately.

Before continuing this discussion of reflective practices, I want to briefly differentiate between some terms that I use regularly throughout this thesis: reflection, critical thinking, and self-reflection or self-exploration. Within this thesis, I use the term 'reflection' as a general term meaning thinking about an experience after the fact with the goal of gaining additional insights. Reflection is central to experiential education and is at the heart of why we tell stories. When I use the term 'self-reflection' or 'self-exploration', I am talking about reflection that is leading to increased awareness or knowledge of self, to the development or change of identity. Reflection can be important in building an awareness of knowledge and place, but it is self-reflection that embeds the self in this knowledge in meaningful ways (made meaningful through the inclusion of self in narrative). 'Critical thinking', as I use the term in this thesis, refers to using these reflective skills in problem solving. All of these terms reference practices that are mutually supportive (for example any time spent in reflection is building awareness that can later be applied to critical thinking or self-reflection) as well as often taking place simultaneously. As a result, I often use the term 'reflection' as a broad term that encompasses all of them, only using more specific terms when needed. Another term that I have used frequently throughout this chapter is 'self-exploration'. In part this word choice is because 'self-exploration' is the term primarily used within the literature I have referenced on narrative identity, while 'self-reflection' is drawn more from the reading I have done on experiential education. My use of these terms is largely interchangeable, though I think it is worth pointing out that self-exploration is a term that emphasizes the active, agentic nature of

reflection, and connects it well with ideas like Adventure Based Counselling.

4.2.6.1 Establishing lifelong engagement across community

People fail to maintain or identify with skills and roles that they have acquired for a variety of reasons; sometimes it is because one role or identity has overpowered all others, and sometimes it is because for one reason or another the role was never reincorporated into a person's sense of self strongly enough to survive the transition from school or to a new location.

I have talked about the impact of trauma on narrowing individual's identities in section 3.2.5, going over how a person under pressure can commit to defending a core identity over maintaining engagement or allowing growth. Communities confront these challenges through building up their members' sense of self and agency, by helping them to feel sufficiently secure in who they are for them to explore and stay open to other possibilities. We teach language and culture in school, we ensure they get positive messages, we try to give our young people skills to face the future, hoping that what we give will be enough to prevent trauma from overpowering them. For those who have been overpowered and are trying to recover, we run programs that reconnect them to land, to groups of people who understand their journey, and often to new identities by encouraging healthy jobs, or even by diving into learning language. We try to encourage people to see themselves in a variety of ways, taking time to see themselves as a mother, a father, a hiker, a musician, a Michif, a storyteller – every identity supports agency and helps maintain an engaged perspective that is resilient. People engaged in healing often establish a myriad of daily practices that help themselves maintain focus, practices which I suspect also help incorporate all the practices of their new lives into their new identity – the journey becomes the glue that ties things together.

The second challenge, that of skills never being reincorporated into a sense of self, is generally

the great challenge that is faced in education, and this challenge too is confronted in a variety of ways. Some of the institutional realities that lead to these challenges in the first place are things like the existence of school as a separate realm from home life, or age-segregation of children into classrooms. Schools and communities work against these through home and school organizations, events, take-home projects, and through encouraging parent and community support for education.

Another reason for this lack of reincorporation is the sense of passivity that some students feel towards education, meaning that although they may master the skills on demand, a lack of agency or control means that students never see the abilities as a part of themselves at all. Teachers combat this lack of reincorporation through designing projects that cater to interests that students already have, by giving students responsibilities related to what they are learning (such as tutoring). One teacher I have discussed this challenge with at length is Kimberly Johnson, who at the time was teaching grade 7. She passes on agency to her students over their learning and their classroom environment using many different methods, for example by gradually giving students responsibility over planning field trips, choosing their own methods for dealing with their excess of energy, or through finding a myriad of ways for them to be in charge of building their communal identity as a class and building connections with other grades. My favourite thing she does is to plan parent-classroom evening events, with her students preparing the food and then inviting their own families, both giving them roles as representatives of their classroom, and also helping to break down the school-home barrier in one of most effective ways I've seen. All of these activities become more than simply a healthy context for engagement, they become practices that allow students to transfer their learning across domains by lowering these barriers.

Summer camps both give students responsibility and roles, then provides increasing roles and responsibilities as students transition to junior staff and possibly to senior staff (see section 6.3 for more

examples). We choose to give honoraria to young people for roles they take on both to make things financially viable, but also because it is a way for us to teach them that we place value on who they are becoming and what they are doing. All of these things are done to build people up, give them chances to tie things together, and help them feel secure enough that they can continue living these roles later on.

So far, almost everything I have said has focused on what communities do for young people, with a transition point of graduation or reaching adulthood. As we age, however, there are a lot of other ways that we validate and make real the various narratives of self that allow us to stay resilient. Activities that connect us to other people allow relationships and validation, even if those communities are distant and online. And as we age both we and our communities gain new responsibilities and new roles. Many communities even have long-established social roles that people transition into with age, allowing for the development of new ways of engaging with life, always giving us reasons to maintain a healthy perspective through ongoing engagement.

4.2.6.1.1 Applied to language revitalization

When I look specifically at language resurgence, one of the main things that differentiates it from language learning as an undertaking is that the goals of resurgence cannot be boiled down to one or two new year's resolutions, but instead are the work of generations. Learners become speakers become language workers become mentors and so on. As they transition, they take on new roles and responsibilities with their own challenges, their own responsibilities, and their own rewards as we go through life. And these responsibilities include mentoring young people into the same journey, as the goal of living as a healthy (language) community goes on long after we personally are gone.

The second thing that strikes me is the importance of incorporating language into as many *roles*

as possible, not just *domains*²¹. We talk about bringing language back in to fishing, and into singing, and into doing dishes, but we can also think about helping language be a part of *being* a basketball player, *being* a youth counsellor, and so on. This focus on roles also means looking at the various roles people play in the same setting. For example, in basketball, there are the cheerers in the stands, the players, the coaches, and the referees. Implementing this idea can include having roles in the classroom, for example giving students the roles of artist, or recorder, or helper, as practiced by practitioners of Tina Hargaden's techniques labeled CILiftoff, or by practitioners of WAYK as they help every learner transition to being the teacher, or in TPR as students grow in their abilities and begin taking their turns guiding teachers and each other.

Thinking about language this way also has big implications for approaches to documentation, as all these different roles and situations have their own specific phrases, jargon, or things that people need to say, and just teaching people words and grammar does not help people use their language in any real role other than that of language learner. For people to be able to start using language in this way early on in their learning, meaningful and comprehensive (to a domain) supporting resources can be really useful.

4.2.6.2 Establishing practices of critical thinking, reflection and self-reflection across narratives

Anybody who is meaningfully engaged with multiple roles and has developed something of a multi-faceted identity is going to have opportunities for effective reflection and self-reflection (effective meaning experiences are largely reintegrated into narratives of self). There are a few primary ways that

²¹ *Domain* in discussions of language loss is used to talk about where language is used, for example in the home, at church, or at school. This perspective has led to practices like census data that asks about language use in the home, and to the success of revitalization efforts being evaluated by increased domains. While this information is very important, it doesn't necessarily speak to the success of language revitalization changing narratives around identity.

communities encourage this increase in reflection beyond encouraging breadth of experience.

The first way is through giving children a responsibility to think and reflect. I've already talked earlier in this chapter about giving young people agency and the power to speak – and the reality is that the same practices in communities and in the classroom that ask young people to speak meaningfully are also giving them the responsibility and the expectation of thinking, of self-reflection. One major way that this is done in most Indigenous storytelling traditions is through how stories are told to children. I've had a number of friends point out that most traditional stories for children don't end in a moral or just-so statement. One of the implications of this lack of provided meaning is that even from a very young age children are expected, and in fact then have the responsibility, to think through the implications of a story themselves, something that should lead to a practice of reflection that only grows with time.

The next level is by finding ways to encourage this reflection to be multi-directional, by comparing one situation to another situation. Communities do this through some of the storytelling methods discussed in section 4.2.5.2, for example by telling stories that contain self-reflection, with a social expectation that one respond with your own story, one that contains your own humble self-reflection. Another way is through trying to think of stories relevant to a situation or a challenge, and then sharing. Many cultures have roles for people who are extremely well-versed in stories or bodies of texts, with the idea that there is a certain wisdom that comes from long engagement with a broad body of interconnected contexts. The Nuxalk term *asmayuustn*, meaning an educated person or user/wearer of stories, would be a good example of this perspective in my current community. Another very well-known example from an Indigenous context is the Apache perspective on wisdom shared in Keith Basso's book *Wisdom sits in places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache* (1996). In this book Basso describes an approach to wisdom that is built around meaningful engagement with an incredible body of meaningful stories with broad social and survival implications, learnt at relevant locations

scattered across the Western Apache territory, acquired in context through Apache lifeways on the land. Stories, plus life practices, plus land, equal multiple ways that every story becomes connected, and as a result of the subconscious and conscious connections that this process enables, those who have wisdom are expected to have intuitions that can help their communities deal with both unexpected survival or natural challenges and upcoming social challenges. Every new layer added increases the extent to which critical thinking is both encouraged and enabled, resulting in people achieving powers of reflection and intuition that the community recognizes as wisdom.

4.2.6.2.1 Processing

Many of the methods I have discussed up to this point including Comprehensible Input, WAYK, experiential education in the broad sense as well as almost all of the healing or youth programs such as Rediscovery or the healing movement have forms of reflection or processing as a key component. For many methods, the goal of reflection is primarily to increase the effectiveness of a lesson in terms of the immediate educational goals. The field that seems to have the most awareness of the importance of processing and reflection for both education and well-being simultaneously is experiential education, in part because of the extent to which it has formed the basis of programs like Outward Bound or a wide range of Outdoor based counselling programs that are common throughout North America. Experiential education also forms a key foundation of the Rediscovery International programs that have been a big part of the Nuxalk Community for decades, programs that are also foundational (along with WAYK) for the Cree Immersion camp run by teachers such as Belinda Daniels and Solomon Ratt²². Because of this apparent specialization, in the following section I will be largely referencing works from that field, in particular Simpson, Miller, and Bocher's book *The processing pinnacle: An educator's guide to better*

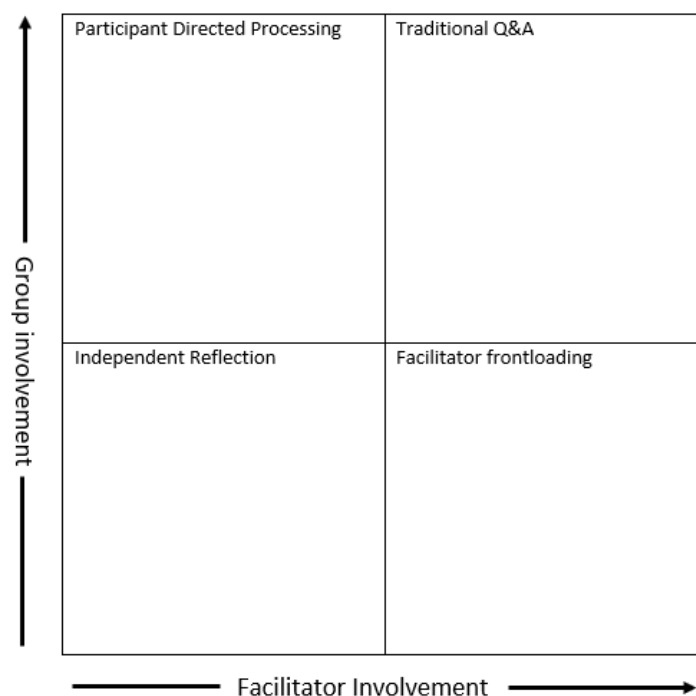
²² My knowledge about what is taught at the camp comes from talking to those who have attended. Belinda Daniels has been recognized for her work as a teacher (Hawkins, 2015).

processing (2006). I have used this resource both because it is the best I have found, but also because it was recommended to me by two professors in the field.

In their book the authors give a basic definition of processing or organized reflective work as "a planned activity designed to give meaning to action" (ibid, p. 14). The authors conceptualize processing methods as broadly being conceptualized in related to two continua – independent/group, and facilitator motivated/participant motivated. They visualize this conceptualization as four quadrants (recreated in Figure 3), with the primary processing methods represented in each of these four quadrants reflecting both the level of responsibility that is given to the individual doing the processing, and the extent to which the individual is expected to do this processing in a social context.

Figure 3

The Four Quadrants of Processing

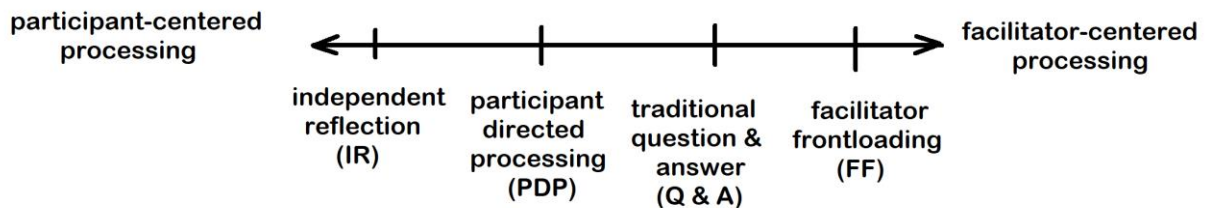


Note: Adapted from *The processing pinnacle: An educator's guide to better processing*, by S. Simpson, D. Miller, and B. Bocher (2006), Wood "N" Barnes Publishing.

Different facilitators can use methods from any one of these quadrants, ranging from simply telling people what they should get out of an experience beforehand (Facilitator Frontloading or FF), to asking leading questions afterwards (basic Q & A), to having participants talk about what they learnt amongst themselves then reporting back (Participant-Directed Processing or PDP) to things like personal journaling or silent contemplation (Independent Reflection or IR). The authors also present these methods arranged along a continuum from facilitator-centred processing to participant-centered processing, as shown in Figure 4.

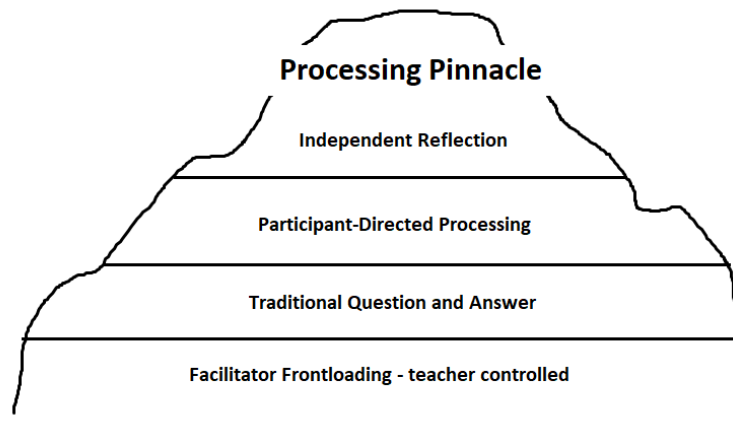
Figure 4

A Continuum of Processing Methods



Note: Adapted from *The processing pinnacle: An educator's guide to better processing*, by S. Simpson, D. Miller, and B. Bocher (2006), Wood "N" Barnes Publishing.

The authors then reorganize this structure into a slightly different model they call the Processing Pinnacle (shown in Figure 5), a model that in many ways mirrors a continuum of learners with or without agency.

Figure 5*The Processing Pinnacle*

Note. The landscape within which we do processing, with the pinnacle of independent reflection being our desired goal for participants. Adapted from *The processing pinnacle: An educator's guide to better processing*, by S. Simpson, D. Miller, and B. Bocher (2006), Wood "N" Barnes Publishing.

The authors go to lengths to be clear that different activities or situations call for different types of processing/review, but that the end goal is for everyone to be very capable of reflecting at the "pinnacle" of self-motivated, self-directed reflection. They point out that growth towards this pinnacle, growth towards my own goals for my students, happens primarily along the middle of the continuum. Learners are learning while being front-loaded with information and analogies, but they are not learning to have agency.

In order to convey a clear understanding of what this process looks like, I want to give some examples of situations where taking a different approach would be appropriate. For example, if I am about to share a story with my students, one that I know will overwhelm them if they try to understand

everything, I can begin by telling them I only want them to listen for one thing. In a similar way, if I want to teach my preschool students about the dangers of crossing the road, I might pretend to cross the road while only looking one way, and then have a friend run me over. I then turn and say "that's what could happen if we don't look both ways." These are both examples of Facilitator Frontloading - the students learn what I need them to learn, but I'm not necessarily making progress on getting them to think for themselves or take responsibility for themselves.

Basic Q & A is often the first step towards getting students to do their own work of processing. If at the end of a class, you want students to give their impression of the class, saying something like "tell me one thing you learnt for your ticket out the door" or "tell me 1 - 5 how much you liked what we did in class today." These are both examples of a very basic Q & A. These provide space for a little bit of growth, and when built into a routine, help establish expectations of engagement. More in-depth Q & As can be truly in-depth, with various open-ended questions leading to real personal exploration, and are often appropriate after outdoor trips, or debriefing after some sort of complicated situation, or after a story that might have a lot that students can unpack. Already, you can get as deep into a topic as is possible, but it is still you that is the facilitator, it is you who is directing and motivating the exploration and growth.

Following basic Q & A are methods that cut students loose from you as the motivator of reflection. Groups that talk about something then bring their conclusions back to the larger group lead to others guiding the conversation, and things like journaling or telling similar stories to your classmates allow you to insert your own experiences and both pose and answer your own questions. Finally, there is what is considered the pinnacle, often called the mountain top experience. Within experiential education, this is the ideal way to process an experience that was so magical, so visceral, that it demands reflection, where a person journals, or simply sits in silence by themselves and reflects. This processing

could be done at the end of a long solo experience, or upon the completion of a challenging climb, or at the end of a day where everyone worked together to accomplish something amazing. I rarely if ever have experiences like this within my own teaching, really only when I am able to combine with other classes to do a larger project, but I still know that even with my own processing, I am working towards preparing my students to be able to engage and reflect without needing outside prompting, to be fully independent.

I should also point out that all of these types of processing have equivalents in most communities. For example, in the Métis world, we have traditions of gentle but pointed teasing to encourage children to reflect on their behaviour, roughly equivalent to Q & A, just with slightly more reflection. This practice is accompanied by traditions of storytelling, with the implications left for the listener to recognize rather than explicitly stated. We have traditions of long meetings and community discussions, similar in impact to participant-directed processing. And finally, we have traditions of fasts and time spent alone in nature, with strong parallels to independent reflection. Similar practices to all these exist with Nuxalk traditions as well, often even more formalized than within Michif communities.

In looking at what this model of how to view different types of processing brings to a discussion of the development of critical thinking, reflection, and self-reflection two main principles stand out to me. First, processing practices, like engagement in general, is inextricably tied to a developing sense of agency. It leads me to wonder if, as with processing, there will be times when I push my students towards agency, towards choices, until eventually my students will be the ones recognizing their need for agency in a given task - the challenge then is to ensure that they understand the value of what we are learning sufficiently that they choose to use their agency to engage with it. The second is that most of the processing that I facilitate as a language teacher falls in the first two categories. By and large, that is appropriate, but if I want to support my students' growth towards agency and towards being

independent learners who continue their growth after they are no longer being questioned, I need to think about both activities that are conducive to the "higher" forms of processing, and also think about how to facilitate or allow that processing when the opportunity arises.

In our school there are a few ways that we work towards these goals, but my impression, whether true or not, is that we're often better at providing the experiences than we are at providing the context for reflection. I believe this shortcoming stems from the fact that we are often siloed, with the English or Socials teacher not necessarily knowing about or being able to take advantage of the amazing activity that their students just went through in outdoor ed. Meanwhile, in my own teaching I often find my biggest challenge in this regard is the combination of short classes and spotty attendance, meaning if I do a really engaging activity, I often don't have time to effectively process it (leading to very simplistic engagement or reflection, and less return-on-experience than would be possible with a processing process that scaffolded a broad integration of many of the experiences), and if I try to process the experiences the following class, enough of my students might have missed out that the attempt will derail my class.

4.2.6.2.2 Applied to language revitalization

There are many implications for language revitalization work when considering the importance of critical thinking, reflection and self-reflection in the context of multiple narratives. I will go over just a few of the main ones that come to mind, looking specifically at ways we can establish practices of responsibility for reflection, ways we can encourage reflection across multiple contexts and narratives, and ways in which we can grow our students' processing abilities towards that self-motivated, independent processing pinnacle that is our goal.

There are some obvious steps that can be taken towards establishing expectations of

engagement with the world, stories included. The first one is what I already talked about - telling stories that don't have a "just so" moral clearly stated at the end, but rather leaving it to the listeners to draw the obvious conclusions. I have found that I do more of this in preschool or at home with my children than I do in my teaching, as that really seems to be the time that we tell the most stories - raven stories, trickster stories, or the many other stories that fit into this pattern. In our immersion preschool, with a lot of pre-teaching and effective examples I do find I am able to teach two to four stories a month in the language, including eliciting student responses to questions such as how they might feel or how the various characters might feel. A second way of building expectations of engagement is through stories that are explicitly designed to demonstrate what this engagement looks like. For example, in the Nuxalk story *Kwanatulhayc*, a group of young people who are described as being properly brought up first get concerned for their community, then thoughtfully make a plan, then show empathy to someone very different from them, and then use what they have gained and learned for the good of their people. The obvious respect that is given these young people can be attractive to engaged listeners, and many other similar stories can be used to establish expectations of engagement (and convey respect for engagement) both through examples and through provided opportunities.

The second major step for me is to find ways to encourage students to compare contexts, situations, and experiences. One easy way is to begin by sharing a story or an experience in the language, then ask "have you ever felt this way? When?" Once students have shared, you all can move on to comparing, both between student stories and your example, and between the stories of different students. As a language teacher, I think this process of comparison is quite different from the work of gaining intuitions about what activities will naturally scaffold into other activities. It is largely a separate skill that allows me to introduce students to new contexts, contexts which they can compare to previous activities. My primary goal is for learners to grow in their awareness of various contexts through

comparison, with their ability to think of how to transfer specific language being a secondary goal. I would rather this develop intuitively, even though as a teacher who plans and schedules, I need my own skills to be more systematic. When it comes to this type of growth, methods like TBLT have the capacity to efficiently build students' skills in a wide variety of contexts. CILiftoff has suggested sequences related to comparisons, different grades of learning objectives related to comparing the past to the present, and social studies objectives usually have whole years of gradually expanding the context of our knowledge.²³

A final observation is that even as I have been focused on avoiding silos and on wholistic practices, when it comes to comparison of stories, or the layering of experiences, there are obvious benefits to chunking experiences, tasks, and skills in such a way as to be able to gain a sense of mastery completeness. This observation is something I already touched in in 4.6.2.1.1, looking at how mastery of roles could be supported by comprehensive documentation work done targeting specific domains. An experience becomes a more useful tool in our narrative identity once it is made comprehensible through processing and being fit into some sort of narrative framework. Our ability to compare it to other experiences grows not just through formulation, but also through it being placed on our mental bookshelf. Tasks, projects, or any body of knowledge or set of skills becomes similarly more usable when given structure through being applied in a specific project, or through being defined and then expanded within some bounds. Being able to narrate a story that comes to a logical finish point about a specific engagement with the task or skill can give us a way of grasping those skills, tasks or experiences in such a way that allows us to apply them to new situations far more than a mishmash of incomplete endeavours.

Finding ways to build this sense of completeness to units or projects has been my personal

²³ Thank you to my supervisor Li-Shih Huang for pointing out that there is actually an entire journal dedicated to the study of how to build abilities to compare and learn from varied contexts. It's called the *Journal of Transformative Learning*, and views this type of learning as "an active process of learning that encourages seeing new things, seeing old things differently, and re-conceptualizing mindsets" (About the journal, 2023, np.)

greatest challenge as a language teacher, even as I've excelled in it in my work doing language documentation. I've always suffered from wanting to jump to the next idea, or the next project, or the next concept, without effectively drawing things to conclusions that students can take home with them. I've worked on this shortcoming in a number of ways, for example by finding ways to scale projects so all my students can feel done (but still allow me to get on to the next project). I've tried developing long term projects such as maps that tie together multiple outings, or had kids take our stories and build their own storybooks. I've also done a lot of work coming to grips with just what I want to teach, and how much of it is feasible. How many places can we explore? How many projects can we complete? How much can be accomplished in light of transferring students and classes that seem to change from year to year? The biggest part of dealing with this challenge, however, has been recognizing that in part it comes from my personality, and as a result facing it in part means developing patience and a willingness to just take time.

4.3. Grounding

A student once said to me “Dale, why would I want to learn about the other countries and other stories? I don’t even know about where I’m from yet.” Not feeling connected to where she was from meant that she had a hard time wanting to reach out and learn. In this section I will look at some of the ways in which the sense of belonging to place, practice and community can be strengthened. This portion in part is a response to section 3.3 in which I discussed how these connections have been damaged. In it I will talk about different ways we ground the identities built through the practices outlined in section 4.2, and some of what the impact can be of working to develop grounded identities.

First, much of what I said earlier in this chapter is directly relevant. In discussing the importance of developing the power to speak (section 4.2.1) and in creating contexts for speech (section 4.2.2), I established the importance of grounding in relationships with others, be they family, friends, community

or other mentors. Stated briefly, it is in the context of others that we are best able to express ourselves, and the meaningfulness of that action is a function of the context, with the strength of those relationships being a multiplier. I then looked at the importance of positive examples (4.2.3), in particular the extent to which these examples were often grounded in healthy practices. In section 4.2.4 I looked into these ideas deeper, showing that as the number and strength of connections increased, the meaningfulness of experiences and speech also increased, taking learners along a journey of ever greater returns. In other words, increased grounding means increased meaning. I then looked at how longer narratives can help build richer nodes of interconnection, tying together multiple experiences and practices into single stories (section 4.2.5), in many ways becoming another multiplier that can help combine even more connections into a growing identity. Finally, I looked at how meaningfully processing experiences (section 4.2.6) is an important part of actually incorporating our experiences into our identities, making those experiences, those relationships, those places, those practices, foundational to who we are.

4.3.1 Comprehensive in scope

More grounding, richer experiences, more connections - all of these have the very much intended result of building a sense of identity that encourages an individual or community to engage with *any* facet of their lived experience, resulting in an identity that is increasingly comprehensive in its ability or willingness to engage, meaning that one single narrative identity is able to learn and grow from all experiences, without being cut off. Another term that can be used for this is *integrated identity*, meaning that the various aspects of a person's narrative identity have been reflected against each other enough for them to become functionally a single, largely non-hypocritical self. Although I do believe that this type of identity is a natural outgrowth of a life of fully supported engagement, there are ways that this scope of engagement can be deliberately encouraged.

In all my communities I've heard individuals say things like "I'm not much into culture" or "I don't do much Michif stuff." The implication of such statements is that there are parts of my life that are expressions of my identity as a Michif or as a member of another Indigenous community, and there are parts of me that are not. Standing against this idea are statements such as "if a Michif person does it, it's Michif." In other words, people view the division of life into cultural/non-cultural spheres as an attempt to limit when and where values are applied. *I believe in maximizing engagement, but not while playing Call of Duty. I believe in paying attention to those around me, but not while I'm at work. I believe in being aware of the natural world, but not while on vacation in Vegas.* It's similar to the idea that I can keep my religious beliefs private, despite that fact that my religious values are entirely concerned with how I treat others. Even the fact that I teach a subject called "Language and Culture" has the unintended consequence of reinforcing this idea that there are bounds to the scope of culture, and by extension, bounds to the applicability of Indigenous languages.

There are a lot of different ways that communities can and do respond to this challenge of perceived narrowness of scope. Church communities I have been a part of will go out of their way to organize regular events that are deliberately not "church" in order to reinforce to ourselves the idea that our identities, built on the stories of Jesus, have implications for engagement beyond some weekly gathering or the physical bounds of our homes. Métis communities I've been a part of have organized regular meals together, support for students, care for elders, storytelling evenings and access to training, all of which becomes a part of what I think of when my mind explores the idea of "being Michif."

Some of the most important work is done in the opposite direction, by taking those domains that young people see as being somehow unconnected, and reincorporating them into community life. I've done this type of reincorporation through incorporating traditional stories into presentations at churches or eulogies, chipping away at the divide many people see between what is worthy of moral

consideration (“church”) and what many families were taught was not (“culture”). Things that serve a similar purpose include land acknowledgements, and the very significant steps that British Columbia curriculum has done in the past few years to incorporate Indigenous perspectives.

In chapter 3 while discussing the ways that identities have been attacked, I talked about how the destruction or displacement of narratives supporting cultural identities not only damaged or remade those identities, but also had a secondary effect of harming the ability to create meaningful identities at all, including those that reach far beyond the scope of cultural identity. While I have already argued that dividing our identities into things that are Michif or are not Michif is a way of artificially siloing the functionality of our identities, I *do* believe that there is such a thing as a core body of stories, values, or practices that lead to the development of this cultural identity. When these core components include practices of exploration and reflection, they result in a cultural identity expanding into a comprehensive identity. This is in contrast to imposed, non-agentive identities, which will always require a separate label, as the non-agentive nature of such narratives means that they cannot be expanded into a comprehensive body of practice.

4.3.1.1 Applied to language revitalization

Looking specifically at language revitalization, the same two methods apply. First, the boundary between the perceived scope of a language-specific identity can be chipped away at from within by expanding engagement into new areas, and secondly, teachers or community members directing activities seen as being outside the domain of “language and culture” can do their part by incorporating Indigenous stories, values, and language in ways understood to go beyond window dressing.

In my own practice, I’ve done this through doing classes in Nuxalk on the autobiographies of basketball players, or through making video resources using Nuxalk to describe in detail all the part of

cars as well as how they work, and explaining the origins of the vocabulary from within the fishing and logging industries. My co-worker during his mentor-apprenticeship program routinely watched Disney movies, with his mentor dubbing them on the fly. I remember when I was still learning Michif, making up pseudo-phrasebook dialog between two Michifs meeting each other for the first time on the streets of Paris, and I remember jokes going back to Thomas King's "Conversational Cree" segment from *The Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour* where they would teach phrases for Crees on cruises, like "money is no object" or "tell the maid to do the beds after she's finished cleaning the bathroom."

I do these types of activities in part to ensure that some of what I am teaching is within domains that learners are passionate about, but we also do it to ensure that as learners develop, they lose that little voice in their head that tells them that what they are doing right now is not relevant to their lives as members of their community, or that what they are thinking about is irreconcilably disconnected from their language. This is also a way of expanding perceptions of community agency. Many young people feel inadequacies regarding technologies they haven't had a chance to become familiar with, and may associate these feelings with their community's culture and language rather than with enforced poverty or other challenges. When they are shown that their language is able to smoothly deal with these domains, my hope is that it will allow them to see their challenges as stemming from a specific history that can be combatted rather than attributing the challenge to something like culture or an inherent lack of agency on the part of their community. The end goal being worked towards is young people who do not artificially limit their own engagement, or who only allow themselves to ask questions about certain aspects of how the world works.

4.3.2 Increasing in depth

Another impact of developing a broad range of healthy practices is that as young people maintain practices of reflection across a broad range of domains and experiences, they are able to

develop a sense of not just freedom of engagement, but also increasing depth of perspective. To put this into other words, the same identity that is promoting well-being across a person's lived experience, should also result in a deepening understanding of what this means or does not mean. This development happens as contradictions and incongruities are evaluated in light of each other, and through engagement with concrete discussion of worldview. In much the same way as I suggest storytelling about self is important in building self-reflection, I personally find that I am only able to initiate these conversations by sharing the contradictions present in my own worldview, contradictions that I come to understand through my own reflection, and which I usually find are most effectively shared through self-reflective storytelling practices such as those discussed in section 4.2.5.

In my own practice as an individual, this increasing depth to my own ideas came about in part because of the ways in which I had been pushed myself by the circumstances of my upbringing, by conscientious professors and teachers, or by others who felt that I was worth engaging with, and that it was worth pushing me with meaningful questions or disagreements. In reality, the practices advocated for throughout this chapter are all steps in this direction. There are only a few concrete things I can add from my own practice that feels slightly outside of what has already been said. First, when I am using stories or presentations from elders that are foundational for the establishment of core values and worldview, I then treat them as such, in that I will at times use them as a reference point in later activities, in or out of language-based activities. The extent to which trying to incorporate these references makes sense will vary greatly depending on the types of activities you are doing, and may never come up at all. Second, when I see incongruities between various beliefs or actions on the part of my students, I will sometimes very carefully draw their attention to it – and by carefully, I mean only after I have established strong, multi-year relationships with the student, as well as established that we are able to talk about personal topics.

4.3.3 A sense of belonging in family and community

In my summary, in section 2.3 I stated that the work of building this healthy identity is grounded in a network of resources that build a sense of belonging in community through family and community stories and practices. In section 3.2 I looked at ways in which resources supporting community have been eroded, and I began section 3.3.1 by outlining some of the ways in which a sense of belonging in community has been maintained. To summarize all this briefly, a sense of belonging has been maintained through family and community gatherings, through participation and sharing of skills in work and play, and through the sharing of stories and reflection that incorporates these gatherings and practices into identity. When these structures have been damaged, families and communities have worked to restore this sense of belonging by restoring these gatherings, these practices, and these storytelling practices. I have already discussed the storytelling and reflection extensively through sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.6, including application to language revitalization, and have discussed various practices specifically as they impact the development of voice and agency throughout section 4.2, also including discussion of how these ideas can impact language revitalization. I would like, however, to add some thoughts on how communities can leverage gatherings, organizational visits and community networking in general to support the development of a more comprehensive idea of community.

In the same way artificial barriers to the scope of various identities can limit the power of positive practices and values to make a difference when needed, perceived social divisions can limit the power of positive relationships and practices to mutually support each other. In other words, if students see me, their parents, and hospital workers as three completely separate groups, lessons learnt or skills developed in one context aren't necessarily understood to be applicable or relevant to a different one, meaning that there is less space for increasing the depth and scope of our identities. Within this context, potentially the most impactful work is that of mentally connecting various components of community in

the minds of young people. I attend potlatches in part so my students know that I know their families. In the past year at my school I've seen groups from the band office come and visit, there have been visits from public health staff, and representatives from the RCMP.

All of these visits matter. They help connect the students with the communities of people represented by these institutions. A way to complement these solo encounters could be to show connection between these groups all at once, something that allows any student's connection to one group to serve as a vicarious or partial connection to other groups within the community. If a host at a community gathering asks all those who work at the hospital to stand up, or all the teachers, or all those who live up valley, it can go a long way to reducing the tendencies of young people to perceive various places as separate or other to themselves. Recognizing the various parts of a community as pieces of a whole should increase the impact of steps communities take to recognize youth as members, as well as making other types of reflection more impactful simply through increasing their passive context.

4.3.3.1 Applied to Language Revitalization

Looking specifically at working to build broader community, this discussion raises some questions that I've had to think about in the past. For example, as a rule, if there are community language classes going on, new medical staff and new teaching staff in communities are quick to join, seeing it as a way of building community connections. Is this broad pool of learners a good thing? At times I think yes, but it does present challenges when you mix a group of highly educated and skilled learners who have only a partial emotional connection to a topic with people who do not have the same study skills, but are deeply committed to learning. It's can be easy to say that the classes should be only for those with the emotional and family connections, yet there is definitely a real value to the other message being given by having broad community presence. Like many situations, there are both challenges and potential rewards, with thought having to be given to how to accomplish the most.

A lot of work is done to have language included in more and more domains, for example through signage in hospitals and public buildings, on roads, in parks, or through use in classrooms, in ceremony, at events, through radio and much more. Something as simple as having students do a survey of all the places they see their language represented or hear it spoken can either be a wake up call to un-entered domains, or an encouraging message to students about just how broad the community support is for them to learn.

There are also ways in which communities explicitly use language to build a sense of belonging as well as healthy practices, in particular practices around building healthy relationships. Trish Rosborough, chuutsqa Layla Rorick and Suzanne Urbanczyk in their paper ‘Beautiful words: Enriching and indigenizing Kwak’wala revitalization through understandings of linguistic structure’ (2017) talk about the nature of polysynthetic languages as it relates to extremely rich and complex, expressive words, giving the example of the word *k’wəla’yu*, meaning “my reason for living,” used to address a loved child. The authors discuss how “beautiful words” like these play a role within language and culture recovery, by grounding the practice within Kwakwaka’wakw values and worldview. This grounding of culture in language is similar to what I did in section 1.6.1 – while I could have shared a Nuxalk perspective on well-being fully in English, I chose to ground my understanding within the context of Nuxalk “power words,” as they tend to be called in Bella Coola. The use of these words connects language to the work of a culturally grounded pursuit of well-being, one heavily tied to the work of building up a healthy community. And it also helps that much of this work is done by elders and knowledge keepers.

At times, this desire to find and create cultural significance in language has led to language change, for example reanalyses of word origins that allow them to make more sense in the context of community values can lead to morpheme or word creation, something I have encountered in every community I have lived in. And for many communities of Cree speakers, the spiritual significance given to

the grammatical genders of animacy/inanimacy in the language has resulted in broad grammar shifts as the language is changed to fit teachings. This shift is not in any way a negative, rather it is yet another way in which languages respond to context and are shaped more and more by the practices and values of the communities that speak them.

4.3.4 A sense of belonging in place and knowledge

Building a healthy identity is also strongly supported by a network of resources that build a sense of belonging in place, primarily through seasonal on-the-land practices, as well as through stories that embed place in the identity of both individuals and their communities.

In this section I want to talk about how relationship to place supports the development and practice of a healthy identity. First, I will provide a working definition of what I mean by place, then I will review and expand some of what I have already said about our relationships to place. In particular, I will look at the use of place as a touchstone for grounding practices and identities in lived reality, and the importance of place as a tool of reflection and engagement with narratives.

Throughout section 3.3 I went over different ways in which people's identities have been gradually disconnected from more and more. I talked about the loss of the social and family relationships that facilitated the development of voice in all the ways I've gone over throughout section 4.2, and I talked about the loss of connection to place. In particular, I talked about how imposed practices and narratives disrupted engagement with the land by breaking connections to changing seasonal practices. I stated that this was through dislocation to new regions, through the disruption of ongoing stewardship via an identity that incorporated agency in conjunction with land. Finally, this relationship was attacked through the imposition of both new narratives of land as a government managed commodity, and narratives of people as separate from land. Within this context, when I talk about place, what I'm really

meaning is our lived connection to our physical world, including practices conducted in place, memories connected to place, and an awareness of time connected to changes to the places we inhabit. These practices, memories, and growing awareness represent a vast body of knowledge and skills, all of which I also connect to the idea of place.

4.3.4.1 Place as a touchstone

In section 1.4 I outlined my own experiences finding grounding through engagement with land-based practices, as well as my path to clearly understanding my worldview to be based in a holistic framework. In section 2.2.3.1 I built on this description, stating the following:

practices in place build relationships, memories, frameworks. And reflection on experiences in place become a touchstone that shapes practice. This reflection can give an ongoing awareness of the importance that our actions in place can have in preventing the establishment of practices that ignore the reciprocal nature of our relationships with land.

This awareness gives us “a relationship with a physical environment that we care for and cannot ignore” meaning that “stories and other narratives coming out of our practice serve to emphasize and reinforce these relationships, ensuring that our community identities are regularly interrogated by the realities of our physical world...”

Connection to place as a touchstone for evaluating our lives and decisions is a core of many of the practices and programs operating in many of our communities. It is at the core of the entire field of experiential and outdoor education, all kinds of adventure-based counselling programs, and for those in the US many are familiar with programs for troubled youth like Outward Bound which bring young people into the wilderness with the goal of giving meaning and agency to them through connection with place.

Historically, the idea of quests, solos, fasting by oneself, or coming of age trips have played a significant role in both my Métis and my adopted Nuxalk communities, where participants are expected to gain a level of perspective through experiences with the land. And you can read about my own experience in section 1.3.5. Today many First Nations communities operate camps through Rediscovery International which incorporate much of these ideas, including solos, and many nations operate or are working towards operating treatment centres and other healing programs that draw on programming that connects participants to place as directly as possible with the understanding that this grounding is a source of strength.

In Bella Coola in the past we have had what was called the Supporting Emerging Aboriginal Stewards (SEAS) program, which ran throughout the summer as well as working with the schools during the school year. We now have Land Based Nuxalk as a class, where each grade does a half day fieldtrip once a week to different parts of the territory. The Traditional foods class includes harvesting, preparing, eating and sharing of traditional foods, grounding students in knowledge of place, knowledge of practice, in taste, and community. These programs and others are giving kids a sense of connection to and familiarity with the world outside their doors. They also try to connect this sense of connection to a range of other learning objectives and subjects, grounding science, social studies, math, and physical education in concrete places.

4.3.4.1.1 Applied to Language Revitalization

The ways in which valuing a sense of belonging in place and knowledge can be and is applied to language revitalization is almost limitless. Literally any way in which language is taught through practices that connect to the land is a step in this direction. In my own practice, I have done units looking at seasonal activities of animals, focusing on how their movements are choreographed with each other and the changing environment. I have done outdoor scavenger hunts with pictures, fieldtrips and mapping of

locations. I've taught stories about places in those places, and taught descriptive language of geography within specific contexts.

One of the criticisms I've had of some approaches to experiential education or ABC is that I see disconnection to *specific* place. In other words, "nature" is allowed to be disembodied and the focus is almost entirely on building learner agency in relation to themselves. In contrast to this approach, Rediscovery programs are always grounded in *specific* locations, including emphasis on elder presence (building continuity) and long-term relationship building. I have tried to follow the same principles in my own teaching, using experiences grounded in specific locations to both build my students' confidence in themselves, but also to strengthen relationships to those specific places, and by extension, with their peers, community and history. You can read more about a specific example of how this can be done in section 6.3.

4.3.4.2 Place as a tool of reflection and engagement with narratives

The idea of specific places having specific significance implies that we give these places significance. The only way that happens is through incorporating them into story, either through sharing pre-existing narratives or through writing them into our own stories through reflection. So before continuing, I want to share a short story of my own.

I remember being perhaps two years old. Mom and grandpa are picking raspberries in the patch down to the right below grandpa's house, just past the shed where he keeps his tiller. I'm sitting on the cool, dark earth back inside the patch, eating ripe ones that have fallen off while grandpa and mom talk back and forth.

I remember being three, and climbing on the rocks behind the old church picking wild strawberries into little paper cups after church with my cousin Gayle. And climbing the spruce tree and

getting gum all over my good clothes.

I remember being four, and my cousins Stevie, Lawrence and Ben have taken me down into the brush towards Six Mile road where we're picking ripe gooseberries. I remember how the gooseberries are growing up and over our path out of a cluster of willow roots, and how the path dips right where we're picking, and how much I want to be like them.

I remember being six, and grandpa coming and getting me to go with him to pick saskatoons above the gravel pit, how we parked just past the S-curves, and went up above to where the berries had gotten a lot of sun. I remember how focused he was, and how fast, and how hard I worked to make my fingers go faster, drop fewer berries, and to be able to pick with both hands at the same time.

I remember being 14, and going up the Suskwa to where dad and his brothers and uncles had logged back in 79, listening to him point out each landmark, each corner where a friend had crashed or been lost, or each timber sale that each different family or group of guys had logged. And I remember getting there, and picking blueberries and huckleberries all day with mom and grandpa as we talked, slowly working our way up through the area below the skid trail, around the point I would snowboard off of in later years, hearing the black bears munching around us, and I remember falling backwards off a log while taking all our berries down to the truck, but not spilling any because I held the buckets up and took the fall on my back, and how proud I was that I had my priorities straight.



My mother and I working our way through a good bush in the same place we've picked since I was young

I remember being 25, out in Manitoba learning Michif, and spending hour after hour picking saskatoons with my friend Heather Souter, practicing speaking as we picked, then going home and listening to Grace Zoldy tell me stories about bears and saskatoons as she was a little girl, and how her father treated sickness with specific parts of wild strawberry plants.

I remember being 38, and holding my baby girl on my lap as I sit and pick red huckleberries in a really nice bush at the far end of the "huckleberry forest" I usually take my students to, the patch of woods that was saved when staff at the school prevented it from being cut down.

I remember being 39, and taking my one-and-a-half year old daughter to an amazing wild

strawberry patch where she could crawl and practice picking and eating the berries as I picked as fast as I could during my lunch break, hoping that over several picks I might get enough to feed twenty people for my birthday party (I did). I remember talking to her about what she was seeing, and showing her how to find the ripe ones.

And I remember being 40, and playing my daughter a bedtime story my mother had recorded for her, about how she and her brother Randy went picking when she was two, in the little meadow across from grandma's house, and how they canned two small pints of wild strawberries for winter, and how much she loved picking berries with her brother right up until he passed away. And I remember my daughter, now three, getting all excited after listening to the story (each time I play it) and turning to me and saying "Daddy, it's like me and you when we was a baby, I love when you and me we pick berries."

And I remember this morning, driving past that spot, and thinking of my girl, and mom, and my uncle, and my grandpa, and that logging block, and that raspberry patch. And when I read this story to my mother, she told me grandpa once told her that picking berries always took him to memories of picking with his mom before she left. And she told me how one of her best friends, when she was taken off to school, found that the one thing all the Métis kids there had in common was a love of berry picking.



My daughter, one shoe off, showing me how many strawberries she's found in our favourite patch

This is just one story that illustrates what this process looks like for me. Stories build a connection to practices, practices build a connection to places, and in turn those places become connections to those stories, to those relationships. I can tell similar stories for mushroom picking, doing firewood, or weeding the garden, and every one of them is a part of this interconnected network of relationships, each feeding the strength of all the others, creating an existence that is grounded in relationships with people, places, and practices.

If I had been blessed to grow up in the traditional territory of my nation, I would have even more stories connecting me to the landscape in even more ways, but even without that, once peopled by experiences and practices, the landscape becomes a network of signifiers, constantly referencing our experiences, prompting thoughts of individuals, memories of practices and their connections to yet

other places, constantly juxtaposing our narratives against each other, helping us as we develop the increasing depth of identity I discussed in section 4.3.2.

When this concept is overlaid on the idea of a healthy identity striving to be fully integrated or comprehensive, it highlights the importance of different connections. For example, if I am harvesting food, then being on the land gives me a sense of security that can allow me to focus more broadly on well-being. If I am not, that aspect of stewardship and corresponding agency is not being reinforced when I do get to go and spend time connecting to place. If I solely spend time by myself on the land, and have no stories of my community connections to the place, then the land is not going to be reinforcing my social relationships. And if I stop spending time on the land after having developed all this experience, while I will still be able to access my memories of these places and my memories connected to them, it most likely ceases to be a regular practice, and as a result a practice of reflection developed this way will suffer. In the meantime, I try to pick berries with my children every summer.²⁴

4.3.4.2.1 Applied to language revitalization

This idea of using place as a layer to access memory, or as a deliberate tool for creating memories that are easily referenced has a lot of applications in language revitalization. The main ways that I have used it have been during the process of doing documentation – if somebody I am recording can't remember language related to something, I can ask them about places where such and such an activity took place, the people who were involved in it, who spoke the language, what sort of things they remember people saying while they were doing it, and if that doesn't bring back the memories of the language examples I'm looking for, there's a good chance that by the next day the person I'm working

²⁴ For a very good resource on the connections between place and developed depth of worldview, read Ken Basso's book *Wisdom sits on places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache* (1996).

with will remember it. When I am trying to get as much language as possible from someone who hasn't spoken in a while, talking through a geographical timeline of their life can lead to working through who was in different places, what was done, and eventually stories and memories start flowing, stories that are full of language and memories connected to those places, which can be used both to contextualize vocabulary and structures, as well as to pass on a sense of those places to the next generation.

The same principles apply in teaching. My classroom is a place, and the combination of consistent expectations, effective classes and general good teaching can make that space one where my students have an easier time learning there than somewhere else. Conversely, when I have the opportunity to do teaching on the land, I always try to provide at least one story that connects students to the place we are learning, in order to help solidify their experience of it, and hopefully make our activities done there more impactful.

4.3.5 Broader applications of grounding for language teaching

The last type of grounding I want to discuss is not so much a separate topic, rather an expansion of what has been said previously regarding grounding. I'm speaking of grounding language learning in meaningful interactions. In this thesis I have not gone through things like the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines or similar resources (*ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012, 2023*), even though I consider them to be extremely useful to anybody teaching language. In broad strokes, these guidelines recommend prioritizing communication, critical thinking and literacy rather than prioritizing goals like mastering the linguistic structures of a language. The approach spelled out by these guidelines can then be combined with principles like the idea of an affective filter, where stressors reduce engagement and learning, and the use of interesting and engaging activities or topics to increase engagement and learning. Restated in the terms I've used so far, learners who are able to engage (who have agency) will learn through engaging, and they will have an easier time engaging

with a topic depending on how they can connect to it. For example, engaging will be easier if the language encountered has been made comprehensible, either through imagery, sign language, physical examples (for example TPR), known context, or previous knowledge. Engaging will also be easier if the context is made more meaningful, for example by having interesting people to engage with, or meaningful decisions to be made, or by being given a chance to express yourself in some way to people who matter to you.

There are a number of different ways that we engage with language. For example, Tina Hargaden's book *Foundations* (2021) divides up the types of contexts she creates for her students into the following categories:

1. Description (describing or learning about things and people in terms of their qualities, locations, setting, colours, and so on)
2. Narration (telling stories, both personal, imaginary, cultural or historical)
3. Information (categorization, articles, lists, comparing & contrasting)
4. Opinion (likes & dislikes, best & worse)
5. Argument (citing sources, making claims, engaging with others)

I won't argue that this list of categories is comprehensive, but I will say that this and similar sources can help learners and teachers find genres of speech that are underrepresented in their documentation, their curriculum or in their skillsets.

When it comes to creating resources for these various categories, teachers of English or French can draw on leveled reading programs, countless short videos publicly available online, and millions of articles on any subject imaginable on sites like Wikipedia, not to mention teacher-focused websites like

teachers-pay-teachers²⁵. When I took stock of the resources I had to support my own teaching of Nuxalk or Michif, in particular literary resources that did not require my presence or the presence of an elder, it initially boiled down to a handful of traditional stories, a lot of recordings that were words with examples, a selection of stories, and few precious conversations. Categories like Opinion and Information, even Description, were almost entirely absent from the body of collected or created resources apart from living people.

This situation has motivated me to create resources for learners that fill some of those gaps, ideally incorporating several different potential connections for learners to engage with. I have created short articles about plants, animals, locations, and people. All these articles draw on interviews with elders, and incorporate pictures, maps, and relevant stories. When possible I have students help in the creation of these articles by doing some of the research themselves, or even by having them write portions of an article after we as a group have spent a portion of a class learning about the subject. I then add more connections by citing which class wrote which parts. I have included an example in section 5.4.3.

This work of contextualizing stories, places, people, practices, or activities can be done in many different ways, ranging from slide shows to simple pre-teaches of words with a picture, to providing reference materials or wiki articles. The end result should be learning that helps learners build a sense of connection to people, place, and practice, while also allowing language to be grounded in the same network of relationships. Achieving this end result should mean both more effective acquisition, as well as better retention.

While I have always used stories in my teaching, I now try to provide specific points of

²⁵ <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com>

connection for students, for example by including the names of the elder who passed down the story to us, the village they lived in, and any specific locations referenced. When possible, I pre-teach lessons using descriptive language about any relevant places, features or animals in stories before I tell them. The result is that when I do tell my story about raven and some type of bird, my students actually have an understanding of what that bird is beyond “the bird that is in that story with raven.” This approach also applies to the types of stories that were discussed in section 4.2.5.2, stories that give grounding in purpose or stories of the community working together in the face of adversity.

Finally, pursuing this type of extensive grounding also has implications for student processing of class activities. With broader goals for acquisition, reflection can be directed to cover any of the various significant connections or themes of a story, from details learnt in the pre-teach, to connections to place, or emotional impact. Processing and reflection can draw on each learner’s personal connections to the topic at hand in order to solidify acquisition.

4.4 Grounding is not a substitute for practice

Over the course of this chapter I have talked of the importance of having a comprehensive, non-fragmented identity that a person is able to live throughout their lived experience (4.3.1). I have also talked about the important work of communities and families curating stories and narratives to become a part of this identity (4.2.5). However, I have also talked about the importance of agency and voice in the creation of healthy identity (4.2.1-4). It should be apparent that there is potential tension between these values of agency and independence with the stated practice of providing narratives that underpin identity. Am I giving voice if am also privileging certain narratives and practices?

This inherent tension is not limited to language revitalization – for much of my life within the religious sphere I’ve encountered objections to sharing religious values, beliefs, or stories with youth or

children. At the heart of these objections are a few underlying assumptions. The first assumption is that the narratives presented in our dominant culture through television, internet and the education system are inherently superior to those of minority cultures, an attitude I've encountered often in the well-meaning questions of people who ask me why a person would ever want to learn their language when they already knew English. The second assumption, however, is more important to the topic at hand – the assumption that as a rule these narratives that are intrinsic to the developing worldviews of youth are received without questioning, that they are absorbed without agency.

Of course an identity can be forced on an individual without giving meaningful agency or voice to the recipient. We have the examples of residential identities (discussed in section 3.2) or of nationalistic identities that are externally controlled (2.2.3.2). In my own experience as a language teacher or learner of Michif I've been in multiple situations where generational definitions of "cultural" have placed significant pressure on me or others to conform to specific values, for example by holding specific political viewpoints or sharing specific viewpoints on various social issues. For the most part (but not always) these have been values that I too have shared, but I have also seen youth adopting a broad selection of stances and views in order to feel a part of their chosen peer group. It seems clear that the work of cultural revitalization can be full of pressures to conform to both historically conservative roles as well as more modern reactionary ones.

How can we as practitioners respond to these pressures? My belief is that the proper response to this challenge is not to cut learners off from foundational narratives, but rather to do what has already been discussed – place an emphasis on learner agency and voice during the transmission of these narratives, while modeling meaningful and agentic reflection as a part of engagement with these narratives. While I believe that as a whole, the body of narratives, practices of engagement, and relationships to place, family and history that make up the grounding of our identities as Indigenous

people are not in conflict with having voice and agency, I feel even more strongly that it is our practices of engagement with these stories, which carry over to our practices of engagement with land, family, the past and the future, that make these narratives ones that give people a voice. On the other hand, if the practices discussed throughout section 4.2 are not central to how we share our stories, we do run the risk of not providing youth with the tools to effectively chart their own path in regards to both the pressures of our own cultures as well as the pressures of colonial cultures.

When young people trying to embrace their culture are confronted with a practice or perspective that they disagree with, they need to have been introduced to practices that model agency over these decisions. This includes all of the practices discussed throughout section 4.2 such as working to give young people opportunities and the power to speak meaningfully, encouraging self-exploration and reflection, then respecting the results of these processes. And these processes also need to have been made easier through providing young people with grounding in family and relationship that can allow them to disagree and engage critically with stories while not feeling that they are risking their sense of belonging and role in their community.

In his paper “Framing language reclamation programmes for everybody's empowerment” (2012), Wesley Leonard talks about how many members of his Miami community can start to self-exclude themselves from language learning because of how much language can be tied in to narratives of identity such as the old idea that if you don't speak your language you're not really a member of your community. In order to combat this, Leonard calls for a “more active engagement with the full Miami community”, something that can be in part accomplished through “ideological clarification” that includes the participation and views of the whole community, inclusive of those who view their identities as different from any perceived cultural center. I see this process of building inclusivity as a broader, even more involved version of the type of community discussions I advocated for regarding what stories to

include in a language program (4.2.5.2). And I see this process resulting in an explicit narrative of inclusive identity that can be actively told to provide a framework for healthy cultural sharing – making narratives of inclusion explicit in order to protect from exclusionary perspectives in the same way that I have advocated explicitly sharing healthy perspectives on language and identity in order to protect learners from colonial narratives (4.2.5.1).

In summary, when narratives are used for identity formation without accompanying practices that support agency, or without accompanying security that can help young people be willing to take the risks of disagreeing, the result can be a loss of agency or a loss of voice, with some people either being excluded from a community or self-excluding. In contrast, by focusing on supporting young people in finding their voices and ensuring that they have opportunities to use their voices meaningfully, we can share our stories without fear of those same stories becoming exclusionary or oppressive, especially if those stories are already supportive of this process. Leonard (2012) uses the term “reclamation” to encompass these acts of reclaiming voice, and gives several examples, including the incorporation of new songs into community practice, or the use of Miami names in new places. Finally, reclaiming voice has to be done for the benefit of all. As Leonard says (*ibid.*), we need to recognize that “people have multiple sources of identity” and that reclamation of voice needs to focus on the rights of community members, and to “reflect the multiculturalism” of his community in the world today. This means that as language activists consider how best to go about revitalizing their communities’ languages, they need to consider the rights and needs of the entire community or they risk their work being empowering for some, while disempowering for others.²⁶

²⁶ But beware, within the Michif community, we have faced challenges from organizations or individuals pushing to end Mentor Apprentice language learning programs, claiming that such programs, by creating a small group of competent learners, is discriminatory against other community members. It shouldn’t need to be said, but yes,

4.5 Summarizing well-being through learning

So far in this chapter I have discussed a range of practices that can support young people in establishing identities that can support well-being, and I have also discussed how this entire journey can be supported by grounding these practices in strong social connections and in place. This journey is not intended to be an approach to second language acquisition, rather it is an approach to pursuing well-being, largely through effective engagement and learning, which implies a layer of implications and considerations for second language acquisition (SLA) work and research. In particular, I believe there are implications for what methods are likely to be most effective in supporting language acquisition, while at the same time building up learners as healthy, agentive, grounded human beings in community.

As I just stated, I have been tempted to try and flesh this out as an “approach” to SLA alongside a communicative or grammatical approach, or even sociocultural or identity approaches; however, I feel that this body of thought can best be applied by practitioners looking at how their current methods can be adapted. I find myself still fully supporting many of the findings and recommendations of the communicative approach (with the major exception that I believe in the importance of focus on form²⁷), and fully appreciating the observations of the socio-cultural approach, and very much engaged with the ideas presented by an identity approach, but still at times realizing that those recommendations and methods are not representing the whole of the considerations that I and many others involved in language resurgence believe to be important. As such, my recommendations for practitioners are

making language available to a large group does require training teachers, and no, we can’t train everybody to be a teacher all at once!

²⁷ ‘Focus on form’ means giving explicit instruction and feedback on the patterns of language, including grammar. The communicative approach initially led to some teaching methods that did not give explicit grammar instruction or feedback, instead assuming that students would learn structures through enough communicative exposure. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods have been challenged by practitioners who believe learners benefit from some explicit instruction regarding form (Ellis, 2016), although still in the context of expected communication of meaningful task completion.

focused on supporting practitioners where they are, with the methods they are using, regardless of whether or not those methods come out of one approach or another. Personally, I do find a communicative approach to be the most in line with the principles I have advocated here, in no small part because of the importance of communication underpinning almost all of the practices I have advocated throughout this entire chapter. However, what I have proposed in this chapter in no way represents a full stack of methods. I won't say that these principles couldn't lead to such a unified body of methods, but that is not what this is. What it is is a way of looking at the process of building learner engagement with a body of knowledge while simultaneously building them up as healthy individuals.

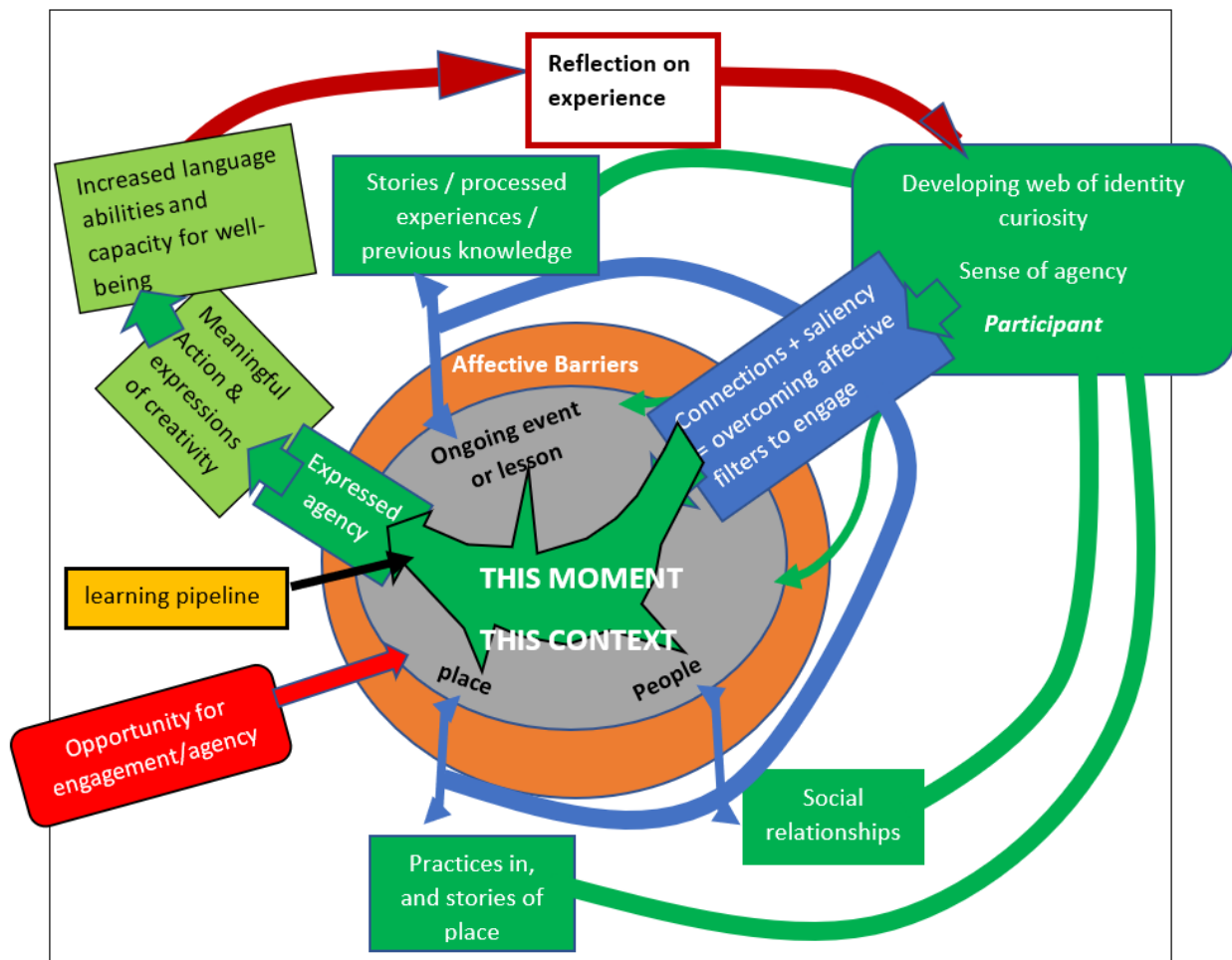
4.5.1 Visual summary

At this point, before moving on to the more concrete applications of these principles I will be presenting in chapter 5, I want to provide you with one more way of visualizing how these different principles interact with each other in the context of learning.

Figure 6 as a whole represents an individual encountering an opportunity for engagement, for example a language class of some kind, represented by the grey centre of the chart. That individual faces some challenges engaging with the event as a result of some combination of affective factors, represented by the orange area surrounding the activity. Some combination of connections (represented by the blue arrows) allows the individual to break through the affective challenges. These connections could be a pre-existing familiarity with the topic, some social connection to others involved with the activity, or any one of a number of other possible connections. Drawing from all of these sources of strength, this individual is engaging, and is learning, represented by the large green arrow drawing on all these connections.

Figure 6

Visualizing the Learning Process from the Perspective of Pursuing Well-being



Note. A representation of the interactions between a participant and a potential learning opportunity, including the role played by developing identity and various forms of social grounding.

In addition to passive engagement, there is some opportunity for the individual to make meaning or express agency actively, either through some act of creativity, or even simply through building an emotional connection to the creativity or agency of others or their community. I've represented this active engagement with the pink boxes, circling back out of the specific activity. Ideally this meaningful engagement leaves the participant with a greater capacity to engage next time.

Following this engagement, it's time for reflection. If the participant is able to reflect on what was done, those connections that were build on, skills that were built, those narratives of agency that were acted out, all of these get incorporated into the individual's developing sense of self, their narrative identity. I've represented this reflection with the red arrows. This expanding identity increases the possible connections an individual brings to the next activity, increases their ability to choose to engage in a new situation, and speeds learning. This individual and their growing network of relationships and abilities is represented by the green boxes reaching out from the right.

Over the course of this chapter, I have looked at ways to overcome these affective barriers (4.2.1 Power to speak), maximizing the positive impact of the social relationships involved (4.2.2 The context of speech) and a few ways to ensure that participants are able to use their voices and creativity meaningfully (4.2.3 Examples of speech). I have emphasized the cyclic nature of this process, repeating over and over, slowly growing agency and grounding (4.2.4 Feedback loops and well-being as a journey), and spent a great deal of time looking at how hearing and creating specific narratives or stories can strengthen those connections that allow us to engage, as well as increasing the meaningfulness of activities and the amount of learning (4.2.5 Telling stories of resilience and well-being). I have looked at how to more effectively reflect or process experiences, with the goal of increasing agency and independence (4.2.6 Self-exploration and reflection).

In this chapter I have also explored ways of ensuring that empowering changes to identity can be used in as broad a context as possible (4.3.1 Comprehensive in scope), and looked at how maintaining this cycle of engagement and reflection leads to increased awareness of connections or implications present in complex situations – what is called wisdom (4.3.2 Increasing in depth). I looked at ways in which community and family connections can be strengthened in order to increase their power against affective factors (4.3.3 A sense of belonging in family and community) and I looked at how similar

connections to land and place (4.3.4 A sense of belonging in place) can be tools for grounding intuitions in reality (4.3.4.1 Place as a touchstone) and a powerful tool for increasing reflection on experiences and stories (4.3.4.2 Place as a tool of reflection and engagement with narratives). Finally, I looked briefly at how this rich environment for engagement can inspire the creation of resources that are more broadly grounded in relationships (4.3.5 Broader applications of grounding).

In the following chapter, I will provide more specific examples of how this understanding of a healthy learning process can impact how we teach.

5. Using curriculum and materials to support well-being

In chapter 4 I presented a model for building and maintaining an identity to support well-being, and I provided a number of ways in which the principles outlined in the model can be or are being applied to language revitalization. Among other principles, I suggested that more is retained and absorbed when learning is contextualized in real or meaningful experiences. I argued that reflection was important, and I argued that establishing these as ongoing processes should lead to learners building a depth of understanding that allowed for a broader integration of new experiences into identity and skillsets. While this is my initial justification for the following chapter, there is more. After outlining his own community's history with racism and colonization and the impact of these traumatic experiences on language speakers, as well as some key recommendations regarding how to foster healing, Diné scholar James McKenzie makes an observation. He says that "[l]ittle has been written about what programs, scholars, communities, and individuals are doing to foster healing through and with language cultivation and revitalization." He states that "we need more resources that specifically address healing in language cultivation" (2022, p. 75). He then goes on to give a number of wonderful recommendations for people in a range of roles related to Indigenous language revitalization, including that "Language programs should identify and implement concrete steps, support mechanisms, pedagogical and curricular elements that address historical trauma and healing with all community members, especially approaches that draw from our own Indigenous ways of healing" (p. 76). He follows this with a call for increasing Indigenous cross-cultural and cross-community sharing of what we are doing in these areas. For me, McKenzie is emphasizing the importance of relationship in research and cooperation as we as Indigenous people in community face shared challenges. This chapter then is both my attempt to share what I understand to be concrete steps and pedagogical and curricular elements relating to these goals, as well as being my offering of my practice to others. The words I've shared in previous chapters sound

nice, but in this chapter I am sharing material that is harder for me to share because it *is* moving away from talk and in to practice. It is closer to the realm of try and fail, try and change, try and maybe succeed, and feels like I am being more vulnerable in showing it. At the same time, I feel that it is precisely this type of work, combined with reflection, that needs to be shared amongst teachers and communities, if we are to improve the way in which our materials and lessons support our goals.

With all of the above goals in mind, this chapter will present a selection of specific examples of how these principles can be applied, accompanied by commentary on my own thought processes and challenges. These examples have been selected with the goal of providing examples in context of most of the principles outlined in chapter 4. Because of the holistic nature of most of these processes, it is not really possible to organize them by principle. Instead, these have been organized with the goal of making the application of principles to each situation comprehensible. This means starting by developing a foundation for understanding (through looking at curriculum development and application in unit plans), then looking at some principles in the context of single activities. As I present more and more specific applications, I move to looking at more complex situations, then finally progressing to looking at resources or techniques that focus on some of the broadest, long-term goals presented in chapter 4. I encourage you to use your agency as you read by either thinking of your own applications, or by finding ways that you agree or disagree with what I have done.

At this point, I will outline this chapter in some more detail. In sections 5.1 to 5.4 I begin with the processes of developing curriculum, unit plans and lesson plans, showing how I have tried to establish a foundation for well-being including connections that are valued by the community, practices that build students' sense and practice of agency, and practices that build students' ability to reflect on experiences and events, both individually and as a group.

In section 5.5 I look at a series of lessons focusing on a specific aspect of grammar, looking at how I can balance the needs of building connection with the needs of building linguistic competency; I look at how building skills related to reflection can be implemented as a whole. In addition, I discuss how I have approached the challenges of approaching the teaching of complex systems (aspects of language that within the field of grammar writing have traditionally been demonstrated through large charts) by instead presenting them as a series of meaningful situations (for example speeches, games, or routine conversations) that can be acquired by a group of learners getting to know each other.

In section 5.6 I look at curricular objectives at the high school level, showing the type of knowledge integration and developing ownership of social practices that I believe the previously established foundation should support. Following this, in section 5.7, I look at a sample unit outline showing something close to my end goals for the school setting.

Before I go on to describe all these resources, I need to share something about how I ended up creating the resources I've described here. I've already told you the story of how I came to be working in Bella Coola in section 1.5, focusing on how I developed a sense of responsibility to community through building relationships with various community members of all ages. At this point I need to share some more details. In my work doing documentation in Klemtu with Sgüüxs, as well as my work doing documentation on Michif with my own nation, my primary focus had been on being as broad and comprehensive as possible in as short a time as possible. To this end I worked on developing my interview skills, developing the skills of the elders I worked with, and on finding or creating a wide range of resources that would allow me to be as reliably comprehensive as possible in the short time it felt I had been given. In 2009 when I first discussed coming to Bella Coola, it was in this context, so when I came in 2011, my primary goal was effective, holistic documentation, combined with an evaluation of all work that had been done to date. What I found was that while a lot of work had been done, in almost

every aspect of the language although the documentation was accurate and largely complete, there was insufficient depth for understanding the language on its own terms, or within its own *langue*, to use the term I talked about in section 3.3.3.

After a few years when I started transitioning from fulltime documentation to part-time, with teaching and training language-workers filling up the rest of my time, I found that the learning resources available had similar shortcomings, so I started developing my own. At first, I modeled the resources I had made off of books that had worked for me in the past, and off of the resources I had used as an ESL teacher, or as a Michif teacher. When these resources were deemed too challenging for learners, I started searching for different teaching methods, and each new method required new materials. By this point, I was only doing documentation about an hour a day, with the rest of my work day spent trying to build the fluency of other language teachers, as well as share teaching techniques with them, techniques that I was also using each day teaching students.

Over the years, these resources were largely the result of my own research, usually being changed or adjusted based on feedback from other teachers or students, or my own observations regarding what wasn't working. There wasn't a lot of place for community input in teaching, since most of what was being taught was very language specific – not really something that a non-language-teacher could even comment on effectively. Subject matter was dictated by the school environment, and even the stories we taught were dictated largely by the dance program that was also a part of that environment. Some time around 2016 I started doing more task-based teaching in addition to the other methods I was using, especially with my adult learners, as well as teaching more stories. This increase built on to the task-based or situation-based teaching that I had been doing at Rediscovery or with adult learners. This change opened up the floor for teaching *things* in the language at school, not just language, and that these *things* could be adjusted based on what the community valued. There was a

language open-house held at the gym, and somewhere around a hundred people came by and wrote down on sticky notes what they felt was important for their students to learn in their language and culture classes. After this the document was regularly available for other school teachers and staff to continue adding to for most of the remainder of the school year. The following year this consultation was deepened with another community session, and in addition we received input from various community elders and knowledge keepers regarding what they felt was important. It was this consultation that influenced much of what you see in sections 5.1-5.3.

Regarding section 5.5, already in 2007 I had been teaching Michif, mostly online, and one of the biggest challenges I faced in this language were the pronominal suffixes. As a result, I started experimenting with different ways of sequencing pronominal suffixes, searching for naturalistic contexts that allowed for a manageable progression. As I started teaching Nuxalk, I realized that I still faced the same challenge, just in a new context. As I started repeating this search for naturalistic contexts for Nuxalk pronominal suffixes, I realized that there were clusters of situations that involved the same pronouns, so I created the resource found in appendix 3, applied in section 5.5, and discussed in section 5.5.1. This work is part of what led me to understanding the importance of grounding language education in concrete, meaningful contexts.

Finally, sections 5.6-5.7 are here largely as a result of reflection, both on my own and with coworkers, following the writing of the initial core of this thesis as the final project for a directed study on language and health. This core consisted of much of what is now chapter 2, combined with a body of reflection that included bits and pieces that are now scattered throughout this thesis. The core ideas of building practices and relationships in a grounded context has given me a lot of food for thought, and the material in these sections have been some of the fruit of this reflection.

5.1 Building a foundation for connection and communication: Level 1 Curriculum

A curriculum is a tool that is used to guide decisions about what is taught and how. It provides a foundation for learning and classroom functioning with an eye looking to future goals and needs. In this section I present a curriculum document that I prepared for young children beginning their language learning journey, ideally at the pre-school to grade one or two level. I follow this presentation with a look at some stages of the implementation: some unit plans and example lesson types. One of my goals through these sections is to explore what the application of these principles of giving children agency while working to build grounding in community, practice and place can look like at varying scales, from big picture to single words.

Because this curriculum is meant for students at the beginning of their journey towards our goals for our language and culture program, the primary goal is that it build a foundation that can be used to support all future learning, both by establishing a baseline language competency, as well as through establishing norms, routines, practices, and attitudes that will support the student's growing relationship with classmates, teachers, the language, and themselves.

5.1.1 Reasons for targeting young learners

Before diving in to the specific objectives I want to share a few of the reasons I have focused so much on young learners. First, young children are very ready to engage in the unfamiliar, meaning that when lots of language is being used around them, they engage rather than pull back. As a result, teaching staff can use as much target language as they are capable of right from the beginning, even if speaking in English is still needed from time to time (for example, if staff get exhausted).

The second reason is that many of the goals discussed in my model, such as emotional/social development or increasing communication skills are the explicit curricular goals of pre-school and

kindergarten programs, with resources and training developed that can support them. In addition, there are language teaching methods that focus on learner interaction, agency and creativity in ways that also explicitly target these goals, even given the shortened attention spans of very young children.

A third reason is that there are significant if not almost total overlaps between the competencies that must be developed to become proficient in the basic structures of a new language, and the social studies, math, physical education and language arts skills targeted in the K-3 curriculum, at least in the BC Curriculum currently being used in all BC schools. This overlap means that language learning also covers much of the material of other subjects, while in later grades time spent on language often means time pulled from other areas of study. Trying to do language teaching when students are already facing serious challenges with literacy and numeracy means that there is a competition for students' time, and it's not at all clear what the best way to divide that time is. What was clear to me was that if I was covering other learning objectives while teaching language, the decision to give more time to language teaching was made easier for administrators, teachers, and parents, each with their own concerns about academic progress.

A fourth reason goes back to my goals for language revitalization to be an important part of targeting student well-being through building communication skills (4.2.1-2). I want these skills to be built through the provision of effective teaching *in* the language, and building cultural competencies and grounding through activities based in the language. If children at a young age can acquire a functional level of language that allows them to begin expressing themselves, connecting to others, and also learning through stories and activities in the language, then from that age onwards the focus of language and culture classes can be on culture, can be on more involved activities, even if lots of work still has to be done to ensure that the language used by teachers in class is accessible. To this end, my goal in this curricular document is that it reflect a real sense of completeness, aiming at a minimal level of

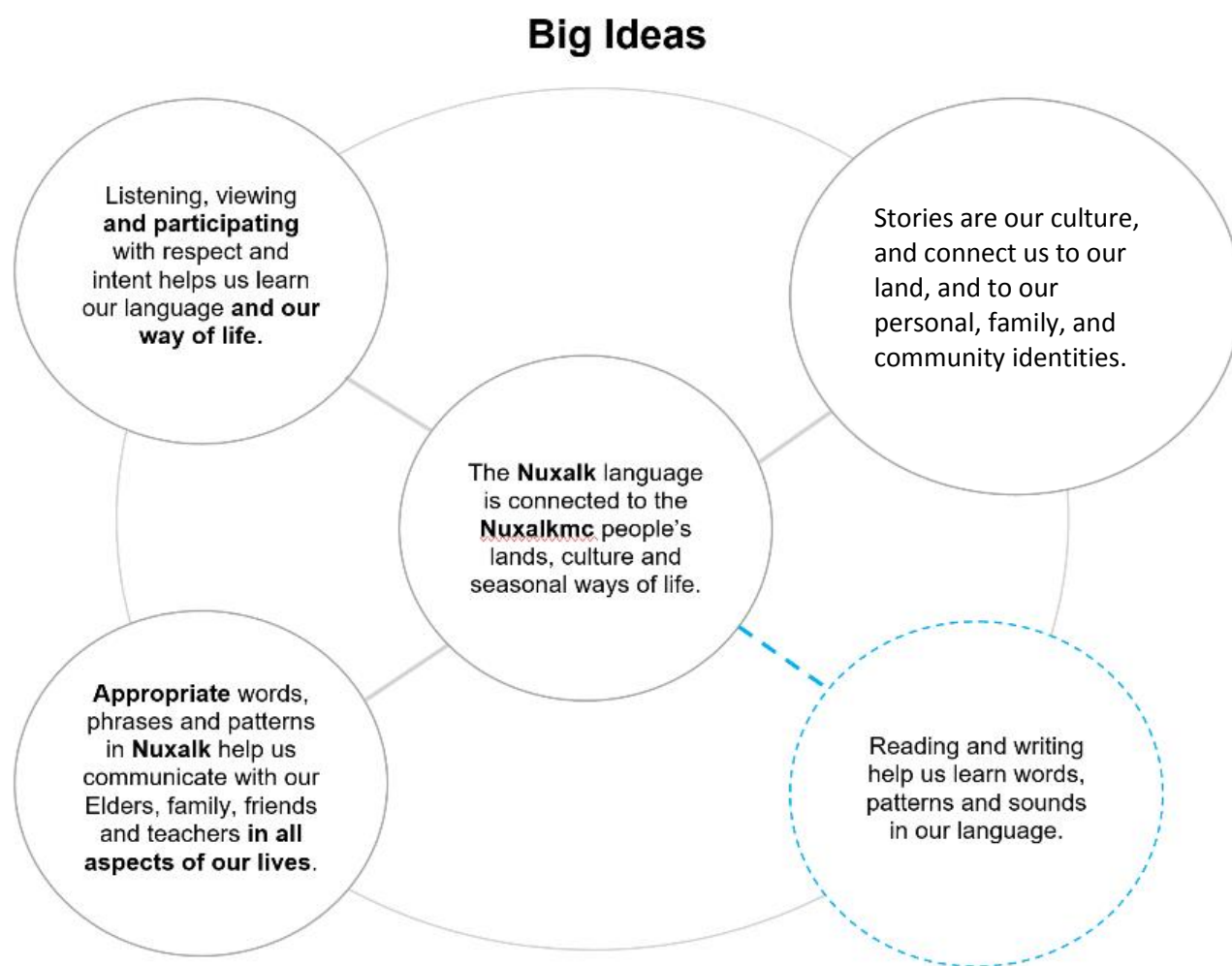
competency in the core abilities learners of Nuxalk need to acquire in order to become conversant. In particular I have focused on basic sentence structure (as reflected in the many activities and question/answer practices); the basic roles of verbs, adjectives, and different classes of words; a basic understanding of word morphology, in particular categorizing suffixes and lexical suffixes used in a variety of common activities; and a sufficient body of vocabulary to be able to meaningfully use all the structures focused on as well as to be able to live out the day-to-day activities of an immersion program in the language.

5.1.2 Foundational big ideas

This language curriculum document can be found in appendix 1. While it draws on consultation and a large amount of engagement with other curricula from the province, it is my own creation. The document is organized around five primary objectives or Big Ideas (Figure 7), to use the terminology common in BC Curriculum, and while these ideas were largely the result of a long process of community consultation, they also align quite closely with the principles I have presented so far. By this I mean that consultation established the center or nexus around which all connections would be focused (presented in the first big idea) as well as helping with decisions about subject matter. The other big ideas were all understood and filled out within this perspective, even if they may reflect my experience as a teacher to a greater degree than they explicitly draw on our specific consultation process. This said, I do not see any areas where I have compromised the vision of consultation, and likewise I believe that the vision of the community also accurately reflects the principles that I believe to be best practices in the pursuit of well-being.

Figure 7

Big Ideas from Nuxalk Level 1



Note. This is the first page of the *Nuxalk Level 1* curriculum, presenting the big ideas that are expanded upon in the remainder of the document. To view the entire curriculum document, turn to appendix 1.

The first big idea is that “the Nuxalk language is connected to the Nuxalkmc people’s lands, culture, and seasonal ways of life.” In essence, this statement reflects both the principles presented in sections 4.3 regarding the grounding of language and knowledge, as well as the understood connections

between language and culture as discussed in section 2.1.2. These principles were also present in statements by community members and teachers who participated in the early stages of developing this curriculum document (described in section 5), meaning that their inclusion also represents community agency in the process (discussed in sections 3.3.6 and 4.2.1), as well as by members of other communities during consultation on future BC curriculum guidelines for language programs.²⁸ Also important is the idea that language teaching should be in harmony with changing seasons, including seasonal practices and events. This is explicitly stated because the community perceives the historical role of education to be cutting people off from responding to nature. To make this goal even clearer, it can be stated in negative terms. For example, school should *not* cut us off from seasonal practices and the land. A second principle is that language programs should aspire to community goals for youth in education, including local perceptions of well-being as well as through connecting students to identity in ways that the community understands to be important (promoting agency, as discussed in section 4.2).

For me, these values as expressed in this big idea encourage me to embed my teaching in a natural environment as much as possible rather than isolating language from context, and also remind me I have responsibility as a teacher both to my students' future and the future of the community (the idea of being grounded in shared purpose, talked about in section 4.2.2). Put simply, I commit to grounding my teaching in place.

²⁸ I already mentioned this process in section 4.2.5.2. Following a series of gatherings of representatives from various band schools and public schools teaching First Nations Languages, a smaller group of language workers with extensive experience producing curriculum was gathered. Over the course of a week of work, with several follow-up meetings, a framework was created that implemented the needs and values brought forth by the consultation, with a major goal being the making of a curricular framework that was both flexible enough to encompass the differing goals and needs of different communities, while still providing enough structure and supporting resources to provide effective direction and guidance. I believe that a change in government prevented the resulting document from being adopted, as it is still not represented on the BC Curriculum webpage <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/additional-offerings> (accessed April 30, 2024).

The second Big Idea reads “Listening, viewing **and participating** with respect and intent helps us learn our language **and our way of life.**” Put in other terms, this big idea is a recognition that language learning takes place in a social context, not isolated from each other (see section 4.2.2). This social context implies that what is being shared via language includes practices of learning and participating, practices that should reflect healthy methods of interaction and engagement that will be important in all aspects of our life. Whatever methods I use to directly engage with students fall under this category, as we establish ways of communicating among students and with staff that allow for evaluation and self-expression. These two modes of communication are prioritized as it is they that are the primary supports for students as they integrate new experiences (via evaluation/reflection) and take ownership of them (through adding their own voices or creativity). These methods must reinforce the types of relationships we want students to be building as they progress, thereby developing practices of healthy engagement with each other, with their environment, and hopefully with other practices they choose to engage in.

Although dictating teaching methods is ideally not done in curricula, this big idea does have very strong implications regarding how we teach, and should encourage both activities connected to this community’s way of life as well as methods that develop students’ abilities to engage on their own terms. This big idea places practices at the forefront of the curriculum, reflecting the centrality of healthy practices as discussed in section 4.2.

The third big idea reads “**Appropriate** words, phrases and patterns in **Nuxalk** help us communicate with our Elders, family, friends and teachers **in all aspects of our lives.** Under this big idea I go into detail about what the primary patterns that need to be mastered are for a person to be able to really use Nuxalk for all the purposes expressed in the other sections. In other words, my choices here regarding grammatical content primarily reflect my imperative to foster relationship-building in the

language (supporting social practices in the language), provide agency in the language (building engagement), and build healthy norms and practices. The wording of this big idea reflects principles related to grounding language knowledge in family, community, and in broad engagement (see sections 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.3). In addition, through the implementation of “Appropriate words, phrases and patterns” this big idea also plays a role in supporting the building of healthy practices of communication (see section 4.2.3, and 4.2.1).

As this document is the beginner level, this big idea is elaborated quite extensively. The objectives, content and examples (pages 270-273 in appendix 1) are designed to help us as staff to both narrow our focus by setting clear bounds on what is to be taught in often overdone domains such as colours, numbers, or simple commands, while also encouraging learners and staff to broaden our activities to include important aspects of the language such as the use of basic suffixes for adjective agreement, aspects that are often set aside for later. The vocabulary content included has been selected to support the actual day-to-day activities that emerge naturally from our language nest environment, the specific stories we focus on, the types of interactions between staff and students we are trying to encourage and build upon, but has also been limited as much as possible (to around 300 vocabulary items for the year) to encourage broad learning, and in-depth use.

While most of the language included in this section is very directly tied to the day to day needs of our program, some structures are given special attention because they tend to present significant challenges to learners. In particular, learners find the extensive use of suffixes to be a challenge, both in comprehension, and in developing habits of using them rather than repeating or expecting English patterns of speech. Three areas where these suffixes are used extensively are as classifying suffixes (different suffixes can be used in counting or describing different objects), using suffixes in actions involving body parts (either your own or someone else’s) and finally transitive verb endings, where

portmanteau suffixes²⁹ seem to take learners many years to get comfortable with. All of these areas pervade the language, and frequently cause frustration for older learners. With this challenge in mind, these three aspects of the language are areas that are specific focuses of the first two levels of the language curriculum, ideally acquired during the first year of immersion, as removing these roadblocks at this point can save a lot of instruction at a later point. This said, these learning objectives concerning suffixes/ language structures still should be targeted within the context of working towards all big ideas, meaning that they should be learnt in relationship, through practice, in a meaningful context as much as possible, and with some student agency involved. Working on these concepts early on, and in appropriate contexts, means that language acquisition can always be more about doing things and engaging with each other than about struggling to understand new concepts.

In section 5.4.4 I will be sharing a number of my own observations and reflections on using this resource, but one common theme that runs across several of my observations highlights the fact that with this specific selection of learning objectives I am trying to give learners an initial scaffold that will let them feel comfortable engaging with most aspects of language as they move forward, so many of the decisions I make while implementing this big idea are geared towards ensuring that all of these objectives are covered in-depth enough for learners to have a framework for using and understanding new vocabulary. I have created my *Nuxalk Level 1* comprehensive to the point where *Nuxalk Level 2* (not included here) only has one additional learning objective, with all others simply being expanded and continued objectives from *Nuxalk Level 1*.

This big idea is elaborated the way it is because most potential teachers of Nuxalk are language

²⁹ A portmanteau suffix is a suffix that combines two concepts into one, for example in, in the Michif word *kaa-waapam-ak*, 'the one that I see' the suffix *-ak* marks both the 1st person subject 'I' and the 3rd person object 'the one/he/she', and it can't be obviously broken down into two constituent parts. As a result, it has to be learnt in its entirety rather than in part, and ideally in a sufficiently elaborated context that makes the relationships apparent.

learners themselves. The list of vocabulary and structures to focus on is designed at least in part to build teacher awareness of various ways to use the language, in order to avoid over-focus on certain types of linguistic knowledge such as animal names and basic actions to the detriment of everything else.

In conversation with my supervisors, I have realized that what I am trying to do with these objectives is to establish a core linguistic competency that is sufficient to scaffold future learning. This document represents most of that grounding, with only a couple objectives moved into Nuxalk Level 2, as at the time of creation I felt they were too ambitious for a single year of immersion. The somewhat artificial limits to vocabulary reflected some assumptions that I feel I should share here. First, my belief was that in order for someone to have a solid, functional grasp on how to use a structure in a new language, they need to be able to use it in at least three or four different contexts. Ideally these contexts should be natural, and somewhat different from each other, so that once a learner connects the dots between the situations, they are able to connect to other fairly different contexts. My assumption was that for any of the basic patterns I was looking at, I shouldn't need more than eight to ten vocabulary items to be able to use the language meaningfully in at least that many different contexts. In fact, I suspected that this number was more than enough. Because of this assumption, for each learning objective, I limited myself to that small amount of vocabulary, except in contexts where the teaching of some small group of words would overlap with learning objectives from another subject. For example, a lot of story vocabulary overlaps with math (before, after, today, yesterday), a lot of physical actions overlap with PE (kick, throw) and a lot of material properties overlap with science (hot, cold, smooth, rough). The total number of words or morphemes required to build this foundation is going to be language dependent, and also depends on to what extent my assumption regarding how broad an exposure it takes to solidify linguistic knowledge is true.

Moving on from purely linguistic considerations, the fourth Big Idea reads "Stories are our

culture, and connect us to our land, and to our personal, family, and community identities.” I have talked extensively about the importance and use of narrative, stories and storytelling practices in the formation and exercise of identity, as well as the role it places in processing experiences in section 4.2.5. At this level, our goal is to build students’ knowledge of story structures and language enough that they are comfortable participating in a storytelling activity, creating structures that can be used to introduce new objects, ideas, and ways of relating to each other and the world. The elaboration of this idea (appendix 1, page 274) becomes a range of practices that all serve to support both engagement and reflection as discussed in section 4.2.6, as well as increased contextualization of language and daily activities.

The fifth and final big idea is “Reading and writing help us learn words, patterns and sounds in a language.” At the age level of our preschool, this idea really only comes in to practice from time to time as we compare the starting sounds of students’ names with various words. Communities often value literacy more for older learners than at this age.

While the specific language objectives contained in this document have at least in part been tailored to our setting, this document tries to strike a balance trying not to over-specify what teachers need to teach to where it removes teacher and student freedom to explore and express themselves, but also recognizing that many language teachers do not have sufficient direction, and are looking at a document like this to provide some structure. In other words, I want a document that can both build an effective starting scaffold for learners to build upon, but also give teachers a sense that they are working from a foundation.

For a curriculum document like this to reflect the values expressed in it, its development, or at a minimum its adoption by an organization should reflect some of the same goals. At the same time, some aspects of the curriculum are only really entirely comprehensible to someone with at least some

significant experience as a language teacher or learner. To this end, I have tried to balance appropriately between being aware of, respecting and adopting as much as possible community suggested content (stories, practices, seasonal knowledge) with my own experience and the shared experiences of others regarding what is required to achieve those goals, especially in the long term.

5.2 Widening the big picture: Looking broader than a curriculum

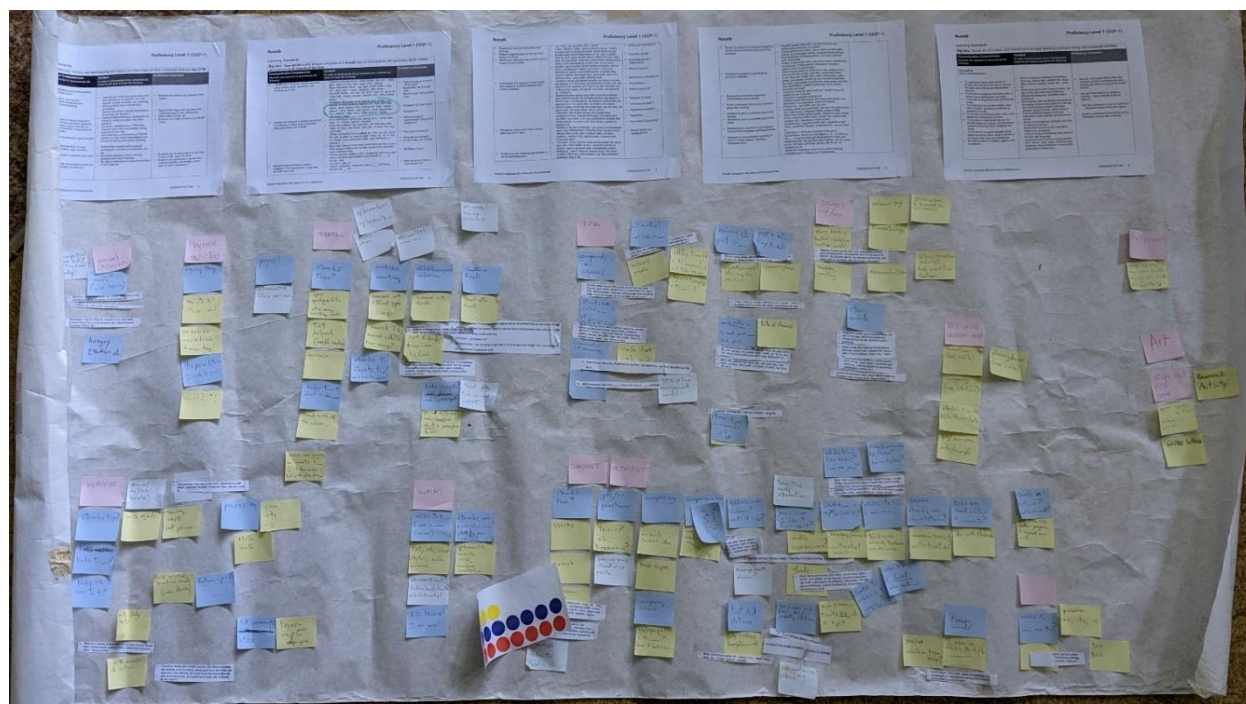
In addition to the learning objectives presented in a curriculum, a language education program attempting to implement that curriculum needs to embody a sufficient understanding of desired themes or topics, a clear understanding of planned methods, and a clear understanding of likely situations or contexts for language interactions that will be present in the context of the program.

For our ECE (Early Childhood Education) immersion program, the topics and stories came from community and staff at open-houses (discussed in section 5), and – probably more importantly – over the course of a lot of conversations and visiting. The techniques used for teaching the language were a combination of what staff were comfortable using, what I was comfortable using, and what techniques staff and I felt could or should be acquired along the way (for example, more WAYK type activities). While I have preferred techniques and methods based on my own experience as a teacher and on much of what I've discussed in this thesis, it was equally important that everyone present in the immersion program be involved and be contributing to their level of ability. Our understanding of the relevant contexts for language use in the program came about through discussing our daily routines based on known needs for our age group (snack, free play, outside time, likely regular fieldtrips, bathroom, arrivals, etc.). What I did was to take the contexts suggested, and other potential contexts provided through a variety of methods, to write them out on a large piece of paper or on sticky notes, and then literally cut and paste the various objectives in to the context that might best allow for the acquisition of that language or skill. It was through this process that we were able to think about the best ways to

connect our language objectives to as many aspects of our students' experiences in our program. The resulting document/process can be seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Turning the Curriculum into Concrete Plans



Note. The above image shows part of the process of implementing the curriculum. An older version of the whole curricular document is across the top, and the objectives or contents (on yellow sticky notes or cut-out) are organized under methods (pink) and contexts or types of activities (blue).

These discussions and the process of trying to visualize what we were going to be doing (resulting in constant modifications to Figure 8) was also an early opportunity to modify the curriculum's language content, as working through the simplest ways of functioning in various situations or the simplest ways to tell a story often revealed specific grammatical structures or vocabulary that could not easily be avoided. I constantly revisited this process over the course of several months as new ideas came up or as time gave me a better understanding of what we were aiming for. It was only once this process of modification reached some level of completeness that I was able to develop the unit plans

discussed in the next section.

This work of integrating language learning objectives with a proposed body of activities and daily activities has a number of specific goals. Ensuring that as much as possible of our regular, meaningful interactions with the program's learners can be carried out in the language works towards ensuring that the language is siloed as little as possible in the minds of our students *and* all staff (see section 4.3.1). The next primary goal of this integration process is to ensure that students are able to develop language competency surrounding their actual daily activities, meaning their use of language can be as meaningful as possible (see section 4.2.1). The final primary goal is to understand how we can fit our desired weekly themes³⁰ into this picture, making it slightly easier to make the stories we teach actually connected to the various parts of the program rather than a separate addition on the side.

I categorized learning objectives under headings that either represented contexts (entry/exit, walks, playground, eating, story time) or methods (WAYK, TPR, Stations). While initially this felt like I was mixing terms and concepts in a way that didn't make sense, what I realized in practice was that when techniques or methods are put into practice, they become practices in a social and spatial context, so what this document was actually doing was establishing what context specific objectives would be primarily targeted in. The reality is that a walk, with its established norms and routines, is every bit as structured an environment as is a WAYK circle, with its own established norms and routines. For me this highlighted the fact that every different context has to have established routines and expectations, both for students and for me.

³⁰ These themes usually are built around a story, but sometimes related to a holiday like Valentine's or Halloween. Normally as a theme changes the books on the shelves can be replaced, often play centres and decorations are changed, and some of the toys are replaced. Crafts and games usually also adjust to reflect the new theme.

5.3 Ensuring breadth of connections: Developing unit plans

In order to teach the curriculum in the context provided, a path has to be developed that works its way through everything we want to teach. For me, the main step to creating this path has been the creation of unit plans. The specific two unit plans discussed here and included in appendix 2 have been prepared to help a group of teachers and staff of varying fluency and training implement the curriculum in a language nest targeting four-year-olds. As we change themes weekly, the units are titled “Week One,” “Week Two,” and so on. The main goal of these unit plans is to take the goals and content of the curriculum, combine it with the available methods, contexts and the themes/topics chosen by staff, and then make a plan for teaching that will integrate that knowledge into as many aspects of our students lives as we can effectively manage, grounding the language as much as possible in practice and classroom relationships. The unit plan is where we actually plan how we will use language in which context, and where we coordinate between different methods and contexts to ensure broad exposure, repetition, and use at school and at home.

The specific two weeks included share a continued theme, both based off of two halves of a single story called Grizzly and Winter Wren, the story of a small bird whose grandmother feeds him dried fish every morning, but the fish keeps disappearing before it’s done soaking. The little bird confronts a grizzly who is taking it, eventually resulting in him being eaten a few times before building a fire in the bear’s bum and escaping. It provides a lot of context for learning specific animals, looking at emotions, large movements, hunger, as well as some basic landscape words, and is a useful tool for introducing a lot of the language we want to start the year with. The contents are supported with suggested activities or helpful hints for creating activities, designed at supporting a beginning teacher.

The purpose of the curriculum is to present a clear vision of the big picture. In contrast, the purpose of these unit plans, when used by a person who has already developed an understanding of that

big picture, is to take what is understood and narrow it down to manageable bites. In this program, each unit plan roughly corresponds to a change in theme, and helps determine stories and what games or crafts and activities are appropriate. Even in presenting a unit plan, I try to do it in such a way that it helps teachers maintain a holistic understanding of what they are teaching, even as the outline simultaneously expresses a wide range of goals and considerations. In order to ensure broad context of use in a given unit, I have spread targeted language across several genres of language function.³¹ For example in unit *Week One* (appendix 2, pages 277-279), I use description (black/white), narration (the story), information (learning about grizzlies and winter wrens), and opinion (how do you think they're feeling?). In order to make this clear, the different functions are colour coded (the use of colours is explained in appendix 2, page 276). I have also drawn on the developmental categories used in the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)³², specifically the category social-emotional, using it as a category within which I group much of our contextually defined language – interactions that are defined and precipitated by the social environment more-so than through planning, and which include most of the classroom's routines (for example words for getting ready to go outside, or for eating). When it comes to the other ASQ categories like fine and gross motor skills, problem solving and communication, even though I draw on the resources for possible appropriate activities, most of the resulting activities are more usefully (in my context at least!) grouped by the type or context of activity. In addition to these categories, I have also included categories that are designed to be taught in specific ways that are already familiar to staff, such as TPR or TPRS³³ (walk, stop!), as well as categories of vocabulary (often not explicitly connected to

³¹ My introduction to these ideas came through CILiftoff.

³² ASQ is a questionnaire commonly used for early diagnosis of developmental delays and challenges, but also is a very useful survey of age relevant developmental goals and includes examples of many relevant activities. It is also commonly used in preschools as a basis for reporting and for planning relevant activities and support. You can learn more at <https://agesandstages.com>

³³ TPRS – for much of my career I have incorrectly thought that TPRS stood for Total Physical Response –

the theme of a unit) or supporting grammar that might be useful in any of the above categories, usually because it is relevant to our weekly theme or story.

These weekly themes or stories are the first and final component of each unit plan, as I use the ability of stories to tie knowledge together in our heads as the principal organizational tool of a unit. In order to make a story the base of a unit, I do several things. First, I retell the story at a level that can be made accessible to the students through using other activities to present the vocabulary and structures. I also tell it in such a way that reflection on emotions and feelings of characters is easily included in the telling process. I also find meaningful ways to learn about the characters or necessary vocabulary of the story (for example looking at pictures of bears and learning about their food, rather than just learning that bear = “nan”). When descriptions of all of these various activities, chunks of vocabulary and themes are put together in one document, the result is not clean-cut, but instead is a multi-faceted document that reflects a broad range of goals brought together with the purpose of making them all as fully integrated as possible, while still being both short and sufficiently clear for the audience. The teacher guide attached to each unit lets me spell out in more detail suggested practices to embed the language in, while also allowing me to streamline the presentation of goals so a teacher can more easily see how what is being taught fits into the bigger picture.

Here are two concrete examples of how this can work, looking at one suggested goal from the first unit. One category of vocabulary is *4. Family Members*, which for unit one includes words for grandparents and the question “who is this?”. In the teacher guide, I suggest having students bring

Storytelling, and primarily used it as a way of teaching stories in which I heavily use actions, props, and simple images in order to convey meaning. TPRS, which actually stands for “Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling” was developed by Blaine Ray in the 1990s, a teacher who had previously been using TPR in his teaching. Like TPR, TPRS also draws heavily on Stephen Krashen’s language acquisition theories as they relate to comprehensible input.

pictures of their grandparents, then talk about the pictures. This activity provides one context for the use of these types of words, but the pattern learned in this activity, as well as most of the vocabulary, will be reused in *15. Story*. Another category worth looking at is *10. Classroom words*. The vocabulary here includes *well done* or *that's not good behaviour*, and the teacher guide suggests role playing different behaviour at circle. In this case as well, however, the language will also be a part of *15. Story*. In both of these situations, the unit plan suggests areas to prioritize the language in, but also ensures that there is a way to reinforce the language in multiple contexts, much as I discussed in section 5.1 regarding how I decided on the size of vocabulary to include in *Nuxalk Level 1*.

One important consideration in the development of a series of units is pacing – ensuring that students or staff are not being overwhelmed by new information before previous material has been sufficiently acquired. The two units presented in appendix 2 appear to have a quick pace – each presents around 40 new concepts in a single week. This rapid pace is both viable and necessary with this program, where language is used constantly in a wide range of specific situations, and has not presented a real challenge in my experience. But, for the first few weeks, most of what is being learnt is very limited in scope – each word or phrase is understood in the context it was learnt in, and will result in a blank look if used elsewhere. As time goes on, shallow knowledge and use becomes deeper, and the pace of introduction of new terms and concepts slows down as each new concept becomes a multiplier of the whole (although at some point, I expect this pace to speed up again). Recognizing that the goal is depth and breadth of knowledge and use, embedded in practice and story, means that pacing has to be measured by a lot more than simply new vocabulary items. My choice has been to get breadth quickly, and pursue depth more long term. This path to building linguistic knowledge might seem far more language-learning-specific than discussions of sharing stories or building social relationships or gaining experience on the land as I discussed in section 4.3 and the subsections, but I see this as an application

of the same principles of grounding and depth, simply applied at the level of our connections to individual words.

The principle of focusing on grounding students in our routines, relationships and place also have implications for sequencing. Things that are very easily made obvious because of our routines and often repeated social situations are sequenced into our plans very early. Question and answer patterns used in all types of circling questions are sequenced in quickly, as well as a small selection of appropriate answers. Other clusters of language such as language related to asking who someone is and possible answers are not overly complicated, and can be sequenced in whenever the theme makes it appropriate. However, as was discussed in section 5.1.2, some aspects of the language are especially challenging, and because of the challenges these aspects present to effective communication, I start building a familiarity with relevant words or contexts from the beginning in order to ensure that challenging but important constructions aren't pushed aside until later. Instead, exposure is regular and increasing from early on.

Another important consideration for all of this has been balancing between establishing enough familiarity and connection to allow engagement, while also ensuring enough change and novelty to encourage it. The amount of new and interesting activities we can brainstorm related to a single story or theme usually seems to be about a week's worth, which explains the time frame of these units (usually one to two weeks). Managing expectations of students with far fewer hours of instruction would likely require very different levels of engagement with stories, and likewise different strategies for engagement.

5.4 Building a foundation for connections in each class: Activity descriptions

When I do the work of implementing the curricula presented in section 5.1, one of the challenges is knowing how to incorporate the principles summarized in section 4.5 not just at the level of

unit plan creation, but also in individual lessons. In the following four examples, I give some ways in which these principles can be applied at the micro level, not just the macro.

Over the past few years, I and my colleagues have used a wide range of language teaching methods. We've taught through TPR type activities, through storytelling, through WAYK type activities, and through a lot of activities which could be understood as being grounded in task-based language teaching. We have done activities that focus on specific skills related to Ages and Stages, or which focus on learning specific vocabulary and concepts for stories or themes. While it is definitely beyond the scope of this document to give examples of all of these, I do want to share very briefly just three types of activities and show how a focus on well-being as understood and discussed in chapter 4 has impacted specific moments of our day. The first type of activity, "which do you prefer?", shows how I try to build on my students' expression of agency in each activity, a crucial ingredient for taking ownership of learning, as well as a necessary component of the healthy identities we want for students. The second activity, "reviewing the day", shows other ways that we build students' narrative skills (section 4.2.1), again building towards a vision of a community of healthy young people growing into adults who are able to effectively process their experiences (section 4.2.6). The third type of activity, "building background knowledge", shows how we build and use background information to increase engagement with practices and with place and community (sections 4.2.2, & 4.3.4)

5.4.1 Activity concept 1 – Which do you prefer?

One type of activity that I like to do regularly is one where my students have to choose between options. For younger students, I have them physically make choices, for example they go sit on a red chair for choice one, and on a blue chair for choice two. I usually have them state their choices as well, for example if the choice is between cats and dogs, I'll put up a picture of a cat and a dog, and students will both say "yanicits wa wats" *I like dogs* and also go sit on the appropriate chair (I will make a series of

choices, with each option circled with the appropriate colour). I then expand on the activity by asking why they made that choice.

While I recognize that this question is a very obvious way to expand the activity, I find it useful to explicitly recognize that in doing this reflection I am trying to accomplish things related to building student well-being. For example, I'm trying to bring experiences from home into the classroom. I'm trying to strengthen their storytelling abilities by encouraging them to link events to each other, as well as encouraging self-exploration and meaning making. Finally, I'm doing this reflection in a group, with the idea that this type of activity will build into their relationships with each other. Throughout all of this, I am narrating what is happening and the decisions that are made, not just repeating in different ways, but also comparing decisions to the decisions and reasons of others. This serves to provide more comprehensible input to students, provide salient examples of other transitive verb endings, and also lets me encourage engagement, for example when I pull a student back in to the activity by saying "Tommy! Did you see what she said? She said she likes cats! She's like you!" While I might have done all of the same things before thinking of them in terms of well-being, the perspective gives me more clarity, and I definitely have an easier time remembering the different things I want to bring into conversations, and at other times the changing perspective has definitely changed what I've done. For example, I am far more likely to try and have a student lead the activity, even if all that means is me whispering each thing they need to say next, as I want to build a sense of agency in what we are doing.

5.4.2 Activity concept 2 – Reviewing the day

Over the course of the day I took pictures of just one of my students, trying to get one picture for each different activity or section of our day, including everything from arriving, to eating, to playing to crafts and so on. At the end of the day I bring up the pictures as a slide show, and as a group we talk through what that one child did that day, using the pictures as a reference, finishing by retelling the

whole “story” as a group.

Figure 9

A Visual Schedule Based on Pictures Taken the Previous Day



Note. An example of an illustrated visual schedule used for storytelling.

The pictures can be put into their own visual schedule (Figure 9), and used the next day, perhaps to as a class talk about what will happen, or later on to compare what happened today with what happened yesterday. For a slightly different type of focus, I can do the same thing but trying to get pictures of as many students as possible.

If I am able to prepare this activity by the end of the day, the activity should mean that students take home more language, again expanding the scope of their learning (section 4.3.1). And once students are used to talking about the day in this way, it makes it easier to talk about routines at home and all that associated language. With time, this activity should result in longer answers to the question “what did you do at school today?” once students arrive at home, meaning they are breaking down that

school/home barrier from both directions.

This activity is an example not of how an activity was modified but rather of a whole activity that came out of thinking through the implications of identity building and related issues. Some of the goals that came out of thinking about strengthening students' connections and ability to create connections included: improving their ability to tell stories; improving their ability to narrate events; remembering things that happened to them in order, and as a result being better equipped to link experiences. Basically, these are all steps to building their power to speak and reflect, and these steps led to the formation of the previous activity.

Each time I have done this activity, I have found it to be very useful. Everyone seems to engage readily with the activity, and I can use it to target kids who are having a harder time paying attention. Having the opportunity to use recent pictures like this allows me to really engage kids with the events of their own lives. This initial activity has led to other activities like pro-actively taking pictures of fieldtrip locations and doing scavenger hunts, followed up with talking about who saw what when we return.

5.4.3 Activity concept 3 – Building background knowledge through language

One of the things I had noticed about my own cultural learning was that I often learned the names of birds or animals through stories, but never developed any context for that knowledge outside of the story. For birds in particular I've noticed that many of my friends as well will admit that they know various names as being the name of a bird, or of a tree, but couldn't draw a picture of it or even recognize it in a picture, and this lack of context is even truer of our four-year-old students. My response to this lack, as outlined in section 5.3, has been to find ways to include information-type language use in my teaching, specifically focusing on teaching about things that will increase the depth of engagement with whatever else I am teaching, and by extension helping to ground my students' learning in

community and place, as discussed in section 4.3. I want to share some of the main ways that I present this type of information in my classroom.

In the unit plan presented in section 5.3 I give the following text: “This is a bird. The bird sits in a tree. This bird is white. This bird is black. The bird flies. The bird is hungry. The bird eats.” In preparation for teaching this to four-year-olds, I will gather at least six or seven separate pictures of birds that match the sentences above, though I don’t mind having several more. I might first go through the pictures pointing out the birds and saying (in my target language) “look! A bird!” later on switching to “is there a bird here?” or “what is this?” If the language foundation for it has been established, I can use various yes/no or WH-questions to give kids more opportunities to express themselves. Eventually I progress to what birds do (fly, sit on nests) and in activities on another day or another week, when I start looking at specific birds for specific stories, I can use images of specific birds to compare sizes, talk about nests, locations, food, and so on, giving my students knowledge that they have acquired in the language itself. This knowledge is then solidified when this bird or animal or object has a role in our storytelling activity, or in a game.

This whole process might be just so much common sense, yet I want to include it as an example of how our teaching can be grounded in a connection to place in small ways. Greymorning’s Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA)³⁴ method uses images to ground learning in visual cues. Some TPR and TPR-S practitioners use very simple pictures representing actions and objects to ground language with easily generalizable cues, and all of these make sense. But if the goal is to build as rich as possible a

³⁴ ASLA, often called the Greymorning Method after its developer Neyooxet Greymorning, is a method of teaching that heavily involves pictures or visual cues. It draws on Stephen Krashen’s theories of second language acquisition (1981), for example the idea of comprehensible input (that learners learn the most when they are able to understand what they are experiencing) (Shek, 2020). See Greymorning (2018) for more information on this method.

web of language for our students, and to connect learners to it as richly as possible, my belief is that that deeper engagement with smaller topics can lead to a greater impact than the quick learning of categories of words or the flashcard-like learning of vocabulary equivalencies, and that this deeper learning, started at this point in time, can help set expectations for a depth of engagement that will only grow as time goes on and language classes continue to engage with both students and with topics and activities in meaningful ways.

With older students who are developing literacy skills, I like to create slideshows that include text, often using online resources like Canva to make it easy to find images and clipart that can support understanding. Depending on the information I include in these slideshows, I am able to connect learners to everything from the elders who provided the information (building community) to seasonal changes.

Another example of this type of resource or method is the creation of articles for a public or private wiki project. In Figure 10 you see an example page from an ongoing wiki project.

Figure 10*Wiki Article on Robins*

Page Discussion Read Edit Edit source View history More Search Nuxalk

T'ichhala

Wicanaw wa t'ichhala ts wa nuyamih wa tsitsipii ts s7amhams, siput'aw wa smihk ts ula anuxumih ts. mukwalusaw, was sk'culhiikaw ts. alhnapiwatim tw s7ayut wa **tsakwiliwa ts**. Knicit tuu wa sqaluts ts. Alhitmutaw wa acwih wa t'ichhala ts alh Nuxalk ssutkams. Aynakwtuu wa acwih ts s7oxwamaw ula ats'aaxh ts, lip'tsutaw ulh Nuxalk s7a7mihanmis.

Contents ^[hide]

- 1 ti s7alh7aynaw ala t'msta
- 2 ti sinaaxwmiixws T'ichhala
- 3 alh7aynaw sninitsaw ts
- 4 references

ti s7alh7aynaw ala t'msta ^[edit | edit source]

Axw alhpstim ts c tu t'msta. ^[1] Acwsanaw ts alh ti snuyamih tc, wics siyanicilh ska anustsayanmtilh ts s7alh7ayutsaw. ^[2] Smsmayamkim ti t'ichhala tc - smsmayuustinih s7alh tu ayk' bxw, anaykakw tu t'msta ska ays t'ichhala, ska ayawis ti syuts tc. Way, ays tu tc cts, axkuks put'akw wa slax wa smihk ts ula anuxum ts. Axw its'ik tuulwamksutakw tu t'msta bxw ska put'aynicit wa alhpul' wa smihk, alh7ays snuyas wa qia ts. Slaxaw ts - wic its'ik si7axw paaxulh ka K'cilhtcurnalhaw ts. ^[2]

ti sinaaxwmiixws T'ichhala ^[edit | edit source]

Naaxwamkim ti sinaaxwmiixws T'ichhala c tu tsaatslukailh bxw. Acwsalcutim ska ayalhaw alh **Acwsalcta**. Nuyamihaw tuu was naaxwmnaw.

T'ichhala qawistala tsu-tsu-tsu
T'ichhala qawistala tsu-tsu-tsu ^[2]

alh7aynaw sninitsaw ts ^[edit | edit source]

Tutu7imantanaw wa t'ichhala ts ala staq'aax - ayut wa imantanaw ts smakw'ps ts ula asmuskw'ps ti st'uk's tc ala stntni. Aynawkw' sts'ktanaw ula kulhulmcih ts wichta amatapsulhaw bxw alh tu ats'aaxh bxw. nu7uqnamkit wa q'panaw ts ulh bxw - asimts its'ik ilh cna7sih ilh - axwmas alh7ays ti imlaakwh bx. Nu7eqnamkit ma wa asmus wa qwiliwa wa q'pa - ama7itsk s7ayut wa ts'icuh wa alh7ay, wa t'ichhalayulh ts. ts'laaktaaxams put's wa musaax wa suncw ts s7ays tsc, asimts ala q'pas alh ti imantanaw tc. K'am7ayliwas sslaxaaxs wa suncw ts s7alhpstutimkw wa t'ic'ichhalayinaw ts, wa mnnmtsinau ts. Asmusams s7aynakw alh ti smalacw tc. Ta swaltim wa t'ichhala ts ca mnnmtsinau ts, sastaw wa amataaaxt ts ulh ti qw'las ti stn, tutu7imantanawts' alh tc.

references ^[edit | edit source]

- [↑] Joshua Moody
- [↑] ^{2.0} ^{2.1} ^{2.2} Captain Schooner

Category: Tsitsipii



Note: this is a short article about robins in Nuxalk. It discusses their size, shape, nesting and mating habits, migration, diet and traditional uses, and the references used are interviews with elders past and present.

The created articles are focused on elders, wildlife, plants, and places, with most of the sources and information about the wildlife, plants and places taken from interviews with elders done by various researchers or community members over the past century. This constant attribution means that the resulting article can not only give knowledge to learners in the language, but it can do so in a way that learners understand that what they are learning is from their own elders and is a part of their cultural heritage. The article above about a robin can be used for a more advanced unit that includes a story about the bird, or a cluster of such articles can be a whole unit (for example I've been using very

repetitive booklets about animals and birds this past semester for most grades). By using more and more of these types of resources, language can become a part of learning, and learning can become a part of not just students' identities, but a part of an identity that is rooted in community.

This type of information can be used to make other resources more holistic. For example, by cross-referencing a dictionary with images and articles, I can change how people interact with it. I can also cross-reference words of unclear meanings with articles or stories dealing with concrete, grounded examples of usage, changing a decontextualized resource into a contextualized one.

These different ways of teaching about objects can be really useful in helping ground the language learning process in concrete connections to place, practice and community, but there is one more step that I really like to do that can use this sense of local connection to help learners expand the scope of what they find meaningful. For example, I have created a presentation that compares the Bella Coola river with the Nile river. I go back and forth, contrasting and comparing boats, weather patterns, responses to flooding, and geography. This narrative is easily illustrated with stock pictures plus some personal photos from the community. By grounding engagement with the Nile river and Egyptian culture and weather in an understanding of their own community's connections to our river, we are showing that their worldview is a legitimate frame of reference for other subject matter or other perspectives, making both perspectives matter at the same time. For me, this example is one of the clearest I can give of how grounding in identity can be leveraged to facilitate engagement, with the bonus that through these types of activities, the scope of that identity is growing.

5.4.4 Reflections on implementation

As I write this reflection, it's been five years since the bulk of this resource stack (from curriculum to unit plans with all supporting material) was developed. In those five years I've had the

chance to use them as a language teacher, as a teacher of adults in evening classes, as a language teacher in a K4 immersion program along with three other staff members, and again as a teacher of both elementary and high school students this past year. Because of this, I have had the opportunity to reflect on how this resource stack has supported and impacted my teaching, as well as on how various circumstances can affect my ability to put it into practice effectively. The following are some of my observations and reflections on this experience.

Consistency seems more important than techniques. The first major observation is that the impact of these resources on learning feels less significant than the impact of attendance. Between Covid and various family situations, during the first year after spending a large portion of the year closed because of Covid, some students were present as few as ten days in an entire year, and two-month gaps because of school closures or month-long departures because of family trips meant that half the time all students were relearning, and the rest of the time at best half the class had the foundation that had been built over the previous weeks. Trying to deal with this lack of consistency means a significant increase in reviews, reteaches, recaps, and pullouts. All of these practices can be supported by more record keeping, but even that only helps so much. I suspect that my passive aggressive letters to parents about how their children were missing a year's equivalent of language instruction for each missed month didn't actually help that much.

The importance of planning and resource development time. My next major observation is that the curriculum and unit plans are only as good as our planning and resources. During my two years in the language nest (K4 immersion), one consistent reality was that in order for these units to be useful, they needed to be turned into activities, and time had to be set aside for preparing them. While this preparation was usually achievable, when for one reason or another we were unable to prepare effectively, it was usually easier to create catch-up units or review previous activities (thereby being able

to use previously prepared activities, even if in a new way) than to try to teach new material while not properly prepared. The same has been true this past year using the same broad outline to shape my teaching of older children. When I have been able to prepare engaging classes, using whatever shortcuts or methods I've acquired, I've had very good experiences. When I am not ready, it's usually better to do on-topic colouring than to try something that I'm not ready to do that leaves both learners and me frustrated with the process.

Challenges drive teaching methods. I've observed that at times the best choice for a teaching method is not discovered through a comparison with other methods, but rather through an understanding of what challenges are holding you back. During my first year teaching K4 immersion we began using longer stories, then following some really good training provided by the FNESC immersion coach, we began going through stories line by line, using a method loosely drawn from TPRS to teach it, and then having separate activities for the structures of each sentence. We found that this was an effective technique for developing teaching material and activities. Later in the year, however, we made the choice to go back to doing longer stories that changed more regularly because of challenges we were having related to children losing interest in themed resources during free play, resulting in more behaviours. In this situation, our choice was to adjust our teaching method in order to match the primary challenges we were facing, namely, disruptive behaviour resulting from a loss of interest. I find it very difficult to decide for myself which method is objectively better for language teaching, as I definitely see benefits to both – it seems clear that our decision was actually based on what was better for the mental and social-emotional well-being of staff and students in our immediate context, based on the types of challenges we were ready to deal with. At the same time, we weren't stepping back from teaching language, we were adapting our methods with the goal of teaching as much as possible without learners or staff burning out. What is clear is that decisions on how to teach are complex.

Gaining a system-wide understanding and combatting staff compartmentalization. Another ongoing observation is that staff working on different aspects of implementing a unit have a hard time seeing the whole, often resulting from staff being siloed into different roles. An example of this would be one staff doing circle time and another teaching food language, but if they are preparing snacks or cleaning while the other one is teaching, neither gets to learn from the other, while the students are getting both. On the one hand, this allows specialization, but on the other hand, it means that staff aren't able to get the same broad exposure to using the language as the students. Given that the language goals of our curriculum for this year is to give learners *and teachers* just enough foundation to be able to grow their knowledge easily, being siloed in this way or specializing really means that teachers are not actually getting the opportunity to build a foundation that will let their knowledge progress along with the children. Some ways of addressing this challenge include ongoing staff language classes to help staff cover what they are missing, as well as establishing norms of staff using the language with each other throughout the day, though this still requires practice and preparation. Learning through teaching might be possible, but my impression is that it is not easy and is definitely not automatic, especially when teaching saps you of the mental energy you want to later use for learning.

Learning to telegraph meaning and effective preparation. My next observation is in regards to establishing a foundation at the beginning of the school year. Before the first year we were able to extensively prepare for the first weeks, practicing the body language needed to make meaning clear, and gaining an understanding of the difference between simply saying words in the target language in the appropriate context, and actually using language meaningfully in context. With enough experience, a lot of this type of physical communication can become second nature, but even simply practicing enough conversations to be able to effectively communicate in our regular routines is still enough to establish a base for communication, and the work paid off with a very successful first month. Even without being

able to maintain the same level, it established enough of a foundation for students to continue learning, and it laid the groundwork for staff to also understand the difference between meaningful exposure to the language versus exposure without accompanying comprehension.

The importance of being able to use your preparation to build a foundation. Staff preparation can still be derailed if the class situation you go into is different than what was prepared for. My second year teaching K4, because of flus and colds and trips and births, for the first two months we had on average only two or three students present. This irregular attendance meant that while during the first year each student learnt through seeing us interact with their peers, there were now fewer such conversations. Because of this, by two months we had accomplished what had taken less than two weeks the previous year. Children hadn't had the chance to use the language with most of their peers, and every time a student returned from another week away, it felt like the year was starting over. At times it seemed that our real "foundation" was only going to be firmly established once we actually had the full class present.

In addition to my previous observation about the importance of consistency, an additional observation that was driven home for me from this experience is that very different styles of teaching are necessary for different numbers of students. A simple back-and-forth that is repeated when appropriate with ten different students might be effective because of how many times it's repeated, but when there are just one or two students, all of a sudden, methods like Mentor/Apprentice seem to have more appropriate insights. My carefully (or not so carefully) planned activities for groups become far less useful, and I start to get better results from outdoor exploration, relying on different types of engagement. I'm still applying the same principles of building connection, but now the avenues for depth of connection have changed. The challenge is that I'm often slow to recognize this change and gain an understanding of how to take advantage of it.

A secondary observation that builds on the first is that during both years doing immersion we never completed all of the over twenty units that had been prepared, but this did not actually negatively impact the learning. By the time we had completed the first nine or ten units, the language exposure, use and experience had been enough for students to have a foundation, however small, in almost all of the learning objectives related to the various big ideas. From this point on, we continued to add vocabulary and concepts as opportunity presents. While we would have weeks with meticulously planned themes, once the foundation was established, then new themes, stories and activities were not significant obstacles, and did not take nearly as much preparation in order to be used effectively. In light of my experience, I can't overstate the value of actually getting everything going well initially, especially in contrast to the challenges I have faced in years with poor initial attendance, or when I was not personally prepared for establishing norms and routines.

The visible results of grounding language. I also want to make some observations regarding moments of visible success. The first that stands out to me is my immersion students' joy in engaging in guessing games, matching a wide range of birds and animals with their preferred foods. This activity draws on knowledge that the students had gained *in the language* through the stories associated with each unit in their K4 program, especially though the activities or resources discussed in section 5.4. Not just knowing the language, but understanding the context as well gave students an apparent sense of mastery that was visible to me as a teacher in how they took pride in their understanding.

Another high point was hearing kids start responding to the use of transitive verbs in fully new situations, showing that some of the hardest and most contextual knowledge was sticking, or hearing another kid telling me how many people were present while using the correct suffixes. What made it more rewarding to me was knowing that their knowledge they were drawing on came not from explicit instruction, but instead from language that they heard me use over and over on the playground or

during various classroom routines. For me this was evidence that the language they were learning was connected deeply enough to the context that when a new situation arose with enough similarities to the primary context, their minds could make the connection. In other words, knowledge embedded in context can be recalled through contextual cues.

Another high point was the ways that kids started to merge languages, creating new Nuxalk words by mixing English into Nuxalk structures, both words and phrases. All of these results were not the result of a single lesson, but instead were the result of a year of planned exposure to, and use of, the language.

There is no one-size-fits-all. The resource stack presented here is not one-size-fits-all, it was designed for my specific context, and for your context may have more layers, or fewer layers. For example, my coworkers have pointed out to me that we need a level between curriculum and unit plans – semester goals or pre-written learning objectives that line up with our reporting schedule, as without these it can be hard to see the immediate connection of a weekly plan to larger goals when some of those larger goals are still goals for staff as well. In other words, assessment needs can dictate structure, as well as many other needs.

Cause and effect is not always clear. When I look specifically at the level of the impact of individual lessons or types of activities or practices it is harder to be confident regarding specific impacts. For example, I always speak to students as if they can understand me, even when I know they can't, but then go to lengths to help them understand, for example restating in different words, gesturing, and so on. Over the course of the year I seem to have an easier time getting my students to make the effort to understand what I am saying, but I can't say if their growth is a direct result of this practice, though I assume there's a connection. This is just one of many situations where I am making assumptions, maybe

even big assumptions, and I think this is okay as well. I have spent a lot of time trying to learn more about being a teacher, and I'm fairly confident I will never learn it all, so maintaining reflection regarding my practices is often going to be the best I can do for my students, as I am not likely to ever have all the answers just given to me.

Expectations of use in natural settings. In the context of the immersion nest, I find that the most common words and structures students begin to use fall into categories of "language that is only used with teachers" like colours and circle time words, and "language that teacher makes us use with each other," which as I've mentioned previously was very little the first year. The second year I made more of an effort to prompt students to ask me explicitly for some types of engagement, for example for pushes on swings or bikes, and so on. I also tried to make student-led activities become more significant, even if that just meant teacher told student what to say to others. I now see more of this language used on the playground and hear about it being used more at home. I believe that my expectations for use have been empowering students to use their voices with other staff. This increased use in turn has been building their ability to broaden their use of language, since they are developing more ownership over it.

Long-term objectives can be difficult to measure. Most of the time I measure success in terms of immediate perceived engagement (are the students engaged with what we're doing in this moment?) and by students' ability to recall material for later activities (for example the matching game between birds and their food mentioned earlier), but often keeping track of long-term progress is harder. We do see kids advocating for themselves both in English and in Nuxalk by the end of the school year, and we do see more communication, but my impression is that most of our goals regarding agency and language use continue to be multi-year, and I am only expecting to see partial results in a year of immersion. This highlights the importance of long-term vision and planning. Teachers need to be provided with clear short and medium term goals that are achievable, but they should also be given a clear understanding of

the long-term vision these goals are working towards.

Prioritizing relational language. My next observation drawing on my experience using these resources is regarding what makes sense to cut from the *Nuxalk Level 1* year plan when I realize I don't have enough time to complete all my objectives. With lots of students, and with regular planned language activities, it's fairly easy to teach adjective pairs like hard/soft, or strong/weak during the course of a week's activities. On the other hand, when I start cutting objectives because of lost time or because I want to prioritize specific language structures, the first things I cut (or the first things I choose not to teach deliberately) are many of the adjectives, including colours and weather terms, as I focus my descriptive language not on teaching various contrasts but instead on the language structures needed to describe characters or components of our themes or stories. This decision is in part because I have found ways to expose students to relevant language structures (including a lot of suffixes) through other parts of our program, but also because while this vocabulary allows me to quickly expand the types of contexts I interact with or the richness of stories, the vocabulary that is most important to me is the emotional or relational richness of characters or people prior to their visual or textual contrasts, which can always be easily taught in context when needed.

5.5 Integrating language content and connection: Adult lesson plans

The following four sample lesson plans (from a full set of 13) were prepared for adult learners of Nuxalk with significant language background, though I hope to some day use them with my high school students. They were prepared with the goal of helping these learners acquire one of the more challenging systems of the language - the full set of transitive pronominal suffixes – while also keeping the learning grounded in a variety of ways, and engaging at different levels. I have also tried to ensure that these lessons contain space for agency, creativity and reflection. I will first briefly talk about the challenge of pursuing grammatical goals within an approach focused on well-being grounded in

communicative teaching practices. I will then outline the structure of these lessons, and finally briefly look at how each lesson separately works towards these goals.

5.5.1 Overcoming challenges to develop holistic grammar-focused lessons

Before discussing these lessons, I want to first talk about a resource that I developed that helped me create them in the first place. One of the apparent paradoxes I have found myself in is that while all the methods I have used and upheld in my teaching can be broadly classed under a communicative approach (meaning broadly defined by communicative goals), I also have spent a lot of time trying to create effective lessons that are structured based entirely on grammatical objectives. The reason for this is that while affective factors do tend to be the largest challenge facing many individuals trying to reclaim their languages, it is also true that many Indigenous languages contain grammatical challenges that can be equally significant in preventing effective engagement with languages (for example, by making communication impossible). In Michif and Cree that grammatical challenge seems to be centered around clause typing and transitive verb pronominal suffixes replete with a large number of portmanteau affixes³⁵, whereas in Nuxalk the challenges as I have observed them have been effective use of various classes of affixes, and, just like in Michif, transitive verb pronominal suffixes. These challenges seem to be quite different from any that faced my ESL students or those that faced me as I studied French, Russian, or other languages, and in part I believe this difference has played a role in why there are few resources from the teaching of world languages to assist learners and teachers in helping students overcome these large, early barriers to communication.

In response to these types of challenges, many of the second language learners I have interviewed or talked to over the years have used methods such as brute memorization of charts of

³⁵ See McCreery (2013) my MA thesis

endings, the results often not being satisfactory to them, as knowledge not grounded in use often proves difficult to draw upon. But simply deciding that one is going to teach the language using a communicative approach or in a grounded and engaging way does not automatically provide a means of accomplishing these goals. In the case of pronominal suffixes, I found that preparing activities that grounded these suffixes in meaningful experiences was made easier by making a document that categorized a broad selection of meaningful situations by the range of pronominal suffixes commonly encountered in them. I called this resource for teachers of Nuxalk my “Telling the mushrooms apart” guide (included as appendix 3), based on how learning to identify wild mushrooms is a skill best developed in context. In figures 11 and 12 you can see two examples of these clusters, giving a list of contexts that correspond to those used in the first few lessons I am about to present.

Figure 11

Contexts for use: 3rd Person Objects, 1st and 2nd Person Subjects

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them	Primary Focus Endings
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits	
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcw		-ticw	
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis	
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh	
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip	
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit	

2ndary
Focus
Endings

Other
Possible
Endings

Intransitive and possessive endings		Passive endings	
I	-ts	I	-tinits
You	-nu	You	-tst
He/she	-s	He/she	-im
We	(i)lh	We	-tinilh
You all	-(n)ap	You all	-tap
They	-(n)aw	They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Lego building activity (causatives),
I spy, Rock Climbing Activity, the
first half of Andy-Andy Over, rock
throwing game (sk'ts'a)

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart ▶

Note. These activities, only require the knowledge of three pronominal suffixes, those marked in blue.

Figure 12

Contexts for use: 1st and 2nd Person Subjects and Objects

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them	Primary Focus Endings																																																				
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits																																																					
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcw		-ticw																																																					
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis																																																					
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh																																																					
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip																																																					
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit	2ndary Focus Endings																																																				
<table><tr><th colspan="2">Intransitive and possessive endings</th></tr><tr><td>I</td><td>-ts</td></tr><tr><td>You</td><td>-nu</td></tr><tr><td>He/she</td><td>-s</td></tr><tr><td>We</td><td>(i)lh</td></tr><tr><td>You all</td><td>-(n)ap</td></tr><tr><td>They</td><td>-(n)aw</td></tr></table>								Intransitive and possessive endings		I	-ts	You	-nu	He/she	-s	We	(i)lh	You all	-(n)ap	They	-(n)aw	<table><tr><th colspan="2">Passive endings</th></tr><tr><td>I</td><td>-tinit</td></tr><tr><td>You</td><td>-tst</td></tr><tr><td>He/she</td><td>-im</td></tr><tr><td>We</td><td>-tinilh</td></tr><tr><td>You all</td><td>-tap</td></tr><tr><td>They</td><td>-tim</td></tr></table>								Passive endings		I	-tinit	You	-tst	He/she	-im	We	-tinilh	You all	-tap	They	-tim	Situations/Contexts Playing tag (various forms), greetings, goodbye Getting into a fight with someone (challenge, hate, love, know, like)								Other Possible Endings							
Intransitive and possessive endings																																																											
I	-ts																																																										
You	-nu																																																										
He/she	-s																																																										
We	(i)lh																																																										
You all	-(n)ap																																																										
They	-(n)aw																																																										
Passive endings																																																											
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You	-tst																																																										
He/she	-im																																																										
We	-tinilh																																																										
You all	-tap																																																										
They	-tim																																																										
Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart ▶																																																											

Note. These activities largely require a largely different set of suffixes, with some overlap with those of Figure 11.

If you look at Figure 11, you will find a list of contexts that tend to involve two people engaging with some third object or person. This includes most throwing games, the game “I Spy”, or most cases of one person teaching another person how to use something. Figure 12 on the other hand is for contexts where two people are engaging with each other such as tag, or even most multi-player first-person shooter games. Each set of situations use the same small set of transitive suffixes, meaning that if I want to provide multiple contexts for practice of a new suffix, I can either choose several contexts from one category, or find another category that overlaps.

In contrast to the very few endings required in the contexts presented in Figures 11 and 12, talking about what someone did yesterday or describing a recent personal story can be the most

involved activity of all (especially if you're remembering along with a friend). A prayer uses completely different endings than a speech, and there is almost no overlap between the transitive suffixes used to play a game of basketball, and the ones used to coach, or the ones used to cheer on a team. Having a resource like this lets me choose one activity to base a class off of, then check my resource for several other similar activities or building block activities that can ground the learning process in meaningful experiences, but still be very tightly targeted on a grammatical learning goal. These types of resources become both valuable tools for lesson planning, as well as useful documentation resources, as they often reveal contexts or situations where your community might have no actual documentation done – for example lots of recordings of stories, but none of heated conversations. More examples of this resource are included in appendix 3.

5.5.2 Building and reinforcing connections in single lessons

As I set about creating these lessons, I first determined my target audience – intermediate adult learners who were also teachers. I then decided how to sequence the grammar I wanted to teach, basically trying to add only one or two endings per lesson, ideally ones with structure that built on previously understood patterns. I then went to my “learn the mushrooms” guide and found several activities that targeted the endings I was trying to teach, or used it as a starting point to brainstorm activities that were more useful to my specific audience, or which might use vocabulary that they were already familiar with. I chose activities and topics that I felt might already have a meaningful connection to potential learners, as well as activities that might push them some, and worked my way towards activities (and grammar) that involved more interaction amongst the class.

The resulting lessons each look something like the following. Each lesson (after the first one) begins with an introduction that both reviews the material engaged with during the previous class, while also reminding learners of their own creativity in crafting the review text used. Since the activity is done

as a group, it is a low-pressure way for students to re-engage with each other and feel settled in before they are asked to contribute individually. In this type of activity, I am focusing on bringing my students' past language learning experience and awareness of social connections to the forefront. If there is some other area of my students' life experience that I want to foreground, I would have to modify my introduction method.

Following this review, I introduce new material in a simple activity that consists of a single back-and-forth between participants, but which can be easily expanded with the addition of a circling or clarifying question if learners are not feeling overwhelmed. My goal is to make the structure I am focusing on and the expectations of the activity as clear as possible – for example depending on the audience or situation I might use pictures or props, and I try and keep things simple.

Eventually I progress to the main component of my lesson, which ideally is a repetition of the same patterns already covered, but presented in a slightly different context, allowing learners to engage differently, and to solidify their newly practiced language. Ideally (though not always) this component will be grounded in an activity that allows some expression of agency, be it through meaningful decisions, some opportunity to be playful with knowledge, or some other expression of agency and creativity. This is also the stage at which I want my students and their various mental tools to be as fully engaged with the activity as possible.

Following the main activity, we review the main structure practiced by creating a short text that reflects what we have learnt and allows us to have some fun making ridiculous statements, all while working together as a group, with no single person feeling pressured to stand out. This is a step back from fully engaged, ensuring that the lesson material gets absorbed as well as the social aspects of the lesson.

Each lesson plan should both feel connected to the previous ones, as well as help prime students for the following lesson. Looking at lesson one, for example, I introduce material through a very clear video showing the same language pattern used several times. I then progress to students acting out selected actions as they describe what they're doing (possibly with assistance) with the class describing what has happened when asked. Next, students take turns guiding each other through tasks of their choosing, now involving more social dynamics in the ongoing language use. We conclude by choosing a character and describing them doing as many actions as possible.

Lesson 1: transitive verb endings 1s>3s -its, 2s>3s -icw, 3s>3s -is			
Vocabulary: ip' – pick up, kwtl' – place, tl'aptu- , take s.t.,			
Phase	Time	Steps	Materials
Pre-Task	1	Low pressure introduction	
	10m	Watch a short video of somebody picking up, moving, and placing objects. Describe the action during the class. Read a text mirroring the video. Example: ip'is Dale ti qiqti tc. tl'aptus ulh ti carpet tc, kwtl'is ulh ti qwli ti tsya tc. Dale picks up the baby, takes him to the carpet, puts him into the green chair.	Clip 1
	2	Increased engagement activity	
	15m	Have students take turns acting out the actions shown on a selected card – pick up an object and take it somewhere, while describing their actions. Follow this up by asking what the students are doing: <i>Stamks wa kstus X?</i> This reviews activity 1.	Deck of cards with pictures of juxtaposed classroom objects
Main-Task	3	Grounding knowledge in community	
	20m	Have students draw two of the cards from the pile, and select one of them. They then try to talk a classmate through creating the juxtaposition of objects shown on the card. Example: Anaykts ska ip'icw ti nan tc. tl'aptucw ti nan tc ulh ti tipl tc. kwtl'icw ti nan tc ulh ti mukw(aalh) ti paqi7yala tc. Way. I want you to pick up the bear, take it to the table, you put it in the red box.	Collection of containers and objects
Post-Task	4	Review	
	10m	As a group, describe the possible actions of a person. Write out the description. Write as much as possible.	Note taking materials and a white board for communal writing.
Debrief	5m	Ask students what they learnt and their thoughts	

For lesson two, after the review to focus learners in on the class and the task, we do three activities progressing through the senses, first following directions, but then with each participant choosing their own topics as they have to progressively pay more attention to the environment in order to see/hear something separate from what has already been seen/heard. The final activity also allows for a large amount of creativity and play as learners make sounds and others guess what they are. Again the conclusion is a review that prepares for the next class, followed by a short guided reflection.

Lesson 2: transitive verb endings 1s>3s -its, 2s>3s -icw, 3s>3s is			
Vocabulary: k'c – to see s.t., acwsnic – to hear s.t., mus – to touch s.t.			
Phase	Time	Steps	Materials
Pre-Task	1	review	
	10m	Review the group write-up from Lesson 1, activity 4. Read it as a group.	Group produced story from lesson 1
	2	Low pressure introduction	
	10m	Play <i>I touch it</i> with colours or objects. Example: teacher says: anaykts ska musicw ti tsya. I want you to touch a chair. Students race to touch, then say: musits ti tsya! I'm touching a chair!	
Main-Task	3	Grounding in other senses and in place	
	10m	Play <i>I spy</i> with colours and objects. After the first few times, begin asking "stamks ti k'cis X? what does X see? and have students answer. Example: k'cits ti ka mukw – I see something red. k'cicwa ti apls? Do you see the apls? Stamks ti k'cis X? what does X see? k'cis X ti Y! X sees a Y.	
	4	More grounding in other senses and in place	
	10m	Activity 4: Play "I hear" outside. Depending on the students' level, you can try categories of objects like bird/animal/thing. Example: Acwsnicits ti stam tc – I hear something. Nmnmk'a? is it an animal? Tsitstsiipiya? Is it a bird? Alternatively, create a list of possible sounds, write or print them on strips of paper and have learners draw them out at random, and try and imitate the sound while others guess saying " <i>acwsnicits ti _____!</i> " <i>I hear a _____!</i>	List of possible sounds, cut up and placed in a basket for learners to draw out of.
Post-Task	5	Review	
	10m	as a group, create a short text about a person taking something somewhere, talking about what he hears, touches and sees along the way.	Note taking materials and a white board or similar for communal writing.
Debrief	10m	Ask students what they learnt and their thoughts	

Lesson three begins with the same review, but for the bulk of the class, the language is learnt via food shared with classmates. After everyone has had a bit to eat and everything is somewhat practiced, we then use the same language to retell a short story, repeating the activity as we use the same

language to create our own short story for next class's review.

Lesson 3: transitive verb endings 1s>3s -its, 2s>3s -icw, 3s>3s is, 1s>2s -tsinu/-minu			
Vocabulary: ulic – to choose s.t., yanic- to like s.t., knic- to eat s.t., alhpstu- to feed s.o.			
Phase	Time	Steps	Materials
Pre-Task	1	Review	
	5m	Read the text created during Lesson 2 as a group	Text from lesson 2
Main-Task	2	Easy intro & Grounding knowledge in community	
	20m	Have a selection of foods. Have students each choose one and state their choices. Flip a coin to see if you eat it (knic-) or feed someone (alhpstu) Example: stamks ti ulicicw tc? what do you choose? ulicits ti klip tc! I choose the grape! (coin flip) knicits ti klip tc! / alhpstuts Adam c ti klip tc. I eat the grape! / I feed Adam with the grape. Alhpstuminu! I feed you!	Dishes and easily shared finger food
	3	Grounding in story	
	5m	Read a story as a group Example: Tic t'ayc ti wats'ts tc. Yanicits ti wats'ts tc. Ihkw'mits ti wats'ts tc! alhi ti wats' tc ala kulhulmc ts. Axw yanicis wa snknics. Axw knicis wa snknics. Kmalayc tc! ip'its ti wats' tc. kwtl'its ulh ti qw'xwmtimutts tc. tl'aptuts ti wats'ts tc ula sik haws ts. Kwtl'its ti wats'ts tc ulh ti tipl tc. alhk'cis ti takwta ti wats'ts tc. musis ti wats'ts tc. alhpstus c ti tl'llkw. Yayaatwi ts'n ti wats'ts tc. axw kmalaycs. This is my dog. I like my dog. I love my dog. My dog is on the ground. He doesn't like his food. He doesn't eat his food. He's sick! I take the dog. I put it in my car. I take my dog to the vet. I put my dog on the table. The vet sees my dog. He touches my dog. He gives him a pill. My dog is happy now. He's not sick.	
	4	Retelling story	
	10m	Retell the story, but to the dog. As a group act out the roles Example: Wats'nu! Yanictsinu! You're a dog! I like you!	
Post-Task	5	Review	
	10m	As a group, write down a text similar to the results of activity 4.	Note taking materials and a white board or similar for communal writing.
Debrief	10m	Brainstorm and discuss how what has been learnt can be applied in the classroom.	

For this class, reflection is focused on thinking about where during our teaching day some portion of the language can be used, for example by using a schedule similar to the following chart.

Figure 13

Brainstorming Grid: How to Use Ulic- to Choose

Entry/Exit	Free Play Tmsmaw ti ip'icw tc, ulictx ti smaw tc – you take just one. pick one.
Snacktime/lunch Kaks ti ulicicw tc? Which do you choose?	Quiet time Ulictx ti anaykmicw tc – choose the one you want (mat, book)
Free play outside Ulictsinu – I choose you!	Clean-up time / Circle time Yatimutx s7ulicanu! Make good choices!

Note. Rubric for brainstorming how to apply new structures in daily routines with students.

Lesson four builds on the previous three lessons by using largely the same vocabulary and structures to play a game of lahal, a traditional gambling game. WAYK techniques like angeling (each person participating having a helper who can assist them in what to say) can be included in the Lahal game until everyone is or has been involved. Ideally, we have time enough to play until we are all comfortable, after which point we either prepare a short text for review or else go straight to reflection, as this is an activity that, though quite limited in language, has the potential to feel like a more significant accomplishment for learners.

Lesson 4: continuing transitive verb endings 1s>3s -its, 2s>3s -icw, 3s>3s is, 1s>2s -tsinu/-minu			
Vocabulary: ulic – to choose s.t., alh7ip’- to hold, t’iixwlayc – to have hit it/guessed right			
Phase	Time	Steps	Materials
Pre-Task	1	Review	
	5m	Read the text created during Lesson 3 as a group	Text from lesson 3
	2	Easy intro & Grounding knowledge in community	
	5m	Review the rules of the game of Lahal	Rules, lahal set
Main-Task	3	Grounding in group and activity	
	30m	Play a game of lahal using the following phrases. <i>ulictsinu!</i> I pick you. <i>Alh7ip’icwa ti qay tc?</i> Are you holding the lahal stick? <i>Axw alh7ip’its</i> – I’m not holding it. <i>Tiixwlaycnu!</i> You guessed right! (you hit it!). Start with two people, prompting them, then as others feel comfortable, expand the game to more players, using other language already known: <i>Maasklits’ wa qaynu ts?</i> How many lahal sticks do you still have? <i>Tuuluts!</i> I win!	
Post-Task	4	Review	
	10m	Review the game, or the last round, asking why someone won or lost. “ <i>alh7ipis Joe ti qay tc, ulucits kuks Rod</i> ” – Joe was holding the lahal stick, but I chose Rod”	Note taking materials and a white board or similar for communal writing.
Debrief	10m	divide students into two groups, give them five minutes to talk together about what they learnt or their thoughts, then use the last few minutes for them to share their thoughts with the whole class.	

Speaking of the planned reflection activity to conclude lesson 4, I’ve planned to do a form of Participant Facilitated Processing rather than a simple question and answer, as I am hoping that the extra time will let learners solidify a stronger emotional payoff from the class than previous ones. I discuss these changing approaches to processing experiences in section 4.2.6.2.

There are ways that the lessons even as described can be grounded deeper. For example, “I spy” can be played using pictures of family or school events filled with familiar faces and places. Another way to increase grounding would be describing the actions of someone, you can imagine them in a significant place, time, or activity. It can be equally powerful to focus on the present and build social connections,

for example by saying, “you have just come inside and your friends desperately want to know what you saw and heard, what can you tell them?” Not everything has to be perfect, but when you keep your focus on these goals of grounding teaching in the various ways discussed, while working to build agency and positive voice, you can see and take advantage of opportunities. And to be clear, there is no special reason why I have *not* used activities such as those that I described in section 5.4, they work as well, but the application of these principles regarding agency, grounding, creativity and so on are not limited to just a few specific approaches to making lessons. In one way or another, these principles influence how I deliver any type of programming.

5.5.3 Reflections on Implementation

During the 2020-2021 school year, I was able to trial the first three of these lessons with staff at the Preschool Language Nest where I work. The process highlighted a number of additional things to consider, especially as this took place approaching the height of Covid in our community, and was cut short by a community-wide lockdown.

The first observation that was brought home to me was that while some methods are definitely more immersive than others, when it comes to maximizing learners’ ability to connect to an activity, knowing the ways that learners are already comfortable learning is important. In other words, when grounding already exists, use it, even if only to create new types of grounding. As I began teaching lesson one for the first time, several of the adult learners were very clear to me that although they appreciated and even approved of learning through speaking, their training and previous teaching meant that they benefited greatly from reading and writing, which actually led to us taking a break while I made short printouts of the main language being used, including models of the conversations being practiced, something that I continued to do for the remaining lessons.

The second observation for me was yet another reminder of the importance of outside stresses. The time we had available to learn together was immediately after work – immediately after a full mask-wearing day with a large number of kids without many real breaks. As a result, the hour to hour-and-a-half classes I had initially planned to do with a group of well-rested adults following a relaxing meal and visiting (basically our pre-covid evening class format) did not work. Within a half hour, even I was finding myself mentally drained, and as a group we were never really able to push beyond about 45 minutes.

The third observation was that reflection and processing (see section 4.2.6) is very much linked to goals and objectives. Even after the first class, when we began thinking about what we had learnt, everyone immediately started talking about exactly how what we had learnt could be used in our classroom. Since so much of our mental energy as teachers is focused on how well we engage our students, this relationship becomes one of the most important ways that we motivate ourselves to engage with new language material, especially when the stresses and demands of that responsibility are already overwhelming other considerations.

The fourth realization was that because of our level of mental exhaustion, we had a very hard time retaining what we were practicing, to the point that by the time our next class rolled around, on more than one occasion we repeated entire activities or even whole lesson plans. In discussing this challenge going into the coming academic year, we chose to move our study period from the end of the day to the beginning, giving us the opportunity to learn something, practice it, discuss how to use it, and then have the whole day to use what we have discussed, rather than reaching the end of the day, learning a bunch, then immediately going home and doing our best to wipe the day from our mind.

5.6 High school curriculum

The next resource I will share is an example of a high school curriculum document created by

myself and Vanessa Hans, a former language and culture teacher at Acwsalcta school. It is aspirational, in that while we believe it to be a realistic goal, we are not yet able to fully cover the described objectives. The reason it is aspirational is that it builds on a foundation of language skills and self-confidence that we have not yet established for students currently going in to high school. This curriculum document can be seen in appendix 5.

I have shared Level 1 Curriculum, but also have mapped out in some detail levels two and three, which I hope to implement at some point in the not too distant future. These levels represent a fairly significant number of instructional hours – for example I believe that level 1 can be taught with four hours a day for a school year, assuming good attendance, prepared resources, and two experienced staff. Levels two and three should take far less time, but because of reduced teaching hours in later years I still expect them to remain multi-year plans that with work will eventually extend to high school.

This means that, by high school, at some point our students will have a foundation of practices, relationships, knowledge and skills that can support students as they start to develop their identities even more. In this section I will share how our goals for our language and culture program in high school (described in the curriculum document included in appendix 4) draw on and build on the foundation that is started with the curriculum documents discussed in section 5.1. It is because of this early foundation that we hope to be able to focus on teaching knowledge and skills via the language later on, with language skills developing as a result, rather than having to focus on teaching language skills, with cultural knowledge, skills and practices as a secondary peripheral focus. It is also because of this foundation that we hope to support students as they take their skills with story, with self-expression, and with reflection to the next level within the context of a strengthening community using their language. The big ideas which are shared across grades 10 through 12 are shared below in Figure 14, and also repeated throughout *Appendix 4: High School Curriculum*.

5.6.1 High school big ideas

Figure 14*High School Big Ideas*

1. Nuxalk Language is connected to the Nuxalkmc people's lands, cultures, <u>ceremonies</u> and seasonal ways of life	2. Appropriate words, phrases and patterns in Nuxalk help us communicate with our Elders, family, friends, teachers <u>and those who look up to us</u> in all aspects of our lives	3. Interacting with literature in our language help us hear and join the voice of our community	4. Listening, viewing and participating with respect and intent help us <u>make our language and our way of life our own</u>	5. Stories are central to our culture. Knowing, telling, creating and sharing our smayusta, smsma, and s7alats'i give us our land, laws and families. They give us knowledge and wisdom to itNuxalk.

Note. These are the Big Ideas that form the foundation of our curriculum documents for grades 10-12.

Big Idea 1 reflects maturing students' increased engagement in culture and ceremonies – they have gone from understanding ideas, to participating and being a part of their community's cultural life, providing far more opportunity for building resiliency through community (see section 4.3.3). Big idea 2 emphasizes the changing role of older students, who are now expected to be developing practices for sharing their skills with others, in particular with younger students (providing a new way for their actions and voice to be meaningful). These relationships represent one way in which we ensure that resulting resilience is not dependent on the school system for its continued existence. Big Idea 3 corresponds to the reading and writing Big Idea of level one, however, at this stage emphasis is on the changing use of literacy, from something to be acquired to something to be used to deepen knowledge and engagement with community. This focus on use can help learners participate in the ongoing historiography and identity creation work of their community (see section 4.2.5.2). Big Idea 4 reflects a focus on ownership of identity, suggesting practices that place learners in positions of actual agency within the activities done (building on section 4.2.1), including agency over content. Big Idea 5 describes our expanded

expectations regarding communication and engagement skills, describing both a broader range of narrative structures as well as expectations regarding application and usage. This idea is a statement of our goal for our youth that they will be able to use our narratives and their own experiences to feel grounded in who they are.

These big ideas all have implications not only for content, but more importantly for methods. Every single big idea is built around the idea of building connections and relationships, implying that methods have to involve practices that make these connections clear, or practices that build these relationships. With these end goals in mind, and with the implementation of the level 1 curriculum (section 5.1), we can bear in mind that we are establishing expectations of working together, of taking language outside of the classroom, of interacting with each other, and we are normalizing the practice of remembering and retelling events. I will discuss what this can look like in the next section.

5.7 Fully engaged: grounding and connection in an interdisciplinary unit outline

The unit plan outline discussed in this section was created with the high school curriculum goals and principles in mind. I created it with grades 7-12 in mind, and though I have never been able to implement it fully as described, I have implemented it more than once in a modified form. Please read through the outline in *Appendix 5: Snut'li Creek Unit Outline (Grades 7-12)*. I view this unit outline as an example of the extent to which an activity can be used to connect students to a learning experience in a variety of ways. This unit outline is designed to go along with the big ideas outlined for the high school level, and I will briefly outline how it tailors with those goals, but also state specifically how it builds on the foundational skills of social grounding, grounding in place, grounding in practice, and a sense and practice of agency and creativity.

Upon reading the unit outline, it should be very clear that it connects students to land, to

ceremony, to culture, and to seasonal ways of life. Rather than focusing primarily on the avenues of connection, I want to look at the ways in which those connections are solidified. Initially, through pre-teaching important concepts I as the teacher ensure that there is enough knowledge for learners to engage with the practices that will make up the field trip (see section 4.3.5). This preteach is combined with stories that connect students' families and culture to the practices (mushroom picking and climbing), ensuring that the experiences will not be dismissed as not being a part of their lives (see section 4.3.1). This storytelling is accompanied by sharing within the group (see section 4.2.6), working to make the field trip a group experience rather than an individual experience, continuing practices of building community (see section 4.3.3).

For both of the field trip options, we begin with a physical activity that tends to be small group-based that encourages deep mental engagement and focused attention (see section 4.2.2). This activity is accompanied by traditional stories connected to exact locations (section 4.3.5), stories that deal with themes of family, connection and healing (section 4.2.5). The storytelling is followed by sharing, group reflection, and the trip finishes with personal journaling, allowing students full control over their meaning-making as they reflect on the day (section 4.2.6).

After the field trip, we maintain the relationship with the place through having family come and tell more stories connected to the specific location (sections 4.2.1-2), as well as through doing projects that allow for reflection on *our* specific experiences in that location, reinforcing that both previous narratives and our own are both important and valued. Finally, through previous permission we validate *our* experiences of the day through traditional governance, naming a climb and validating it at a potlatch.

Looking back on the high school curriculum, this unit outline gives a series of seasonally dependent activities that connect learners with land, culture, ceremonies, and each other. For those

with only some knowledge of the language, place names and important concepts in the language can help participants visualize the landscape and their experiences in a new light. For those who already have a strong foundation in Nuxalk language skills, the unit helps us make new practical domains of use (climbing or mushroom hunting) our own, and the specific stories share patterns of speech that give us a framework for talking about well-being, reflecting on our own, and sharing our journey with others. The ways in which we interact and reflect on these stories helps us to internalize them, taking us closer to being *asmayuustn*, take us further down a path of engagement informed by our values, a path that leads to well-being.

5.9 Reflecting back: Conclusion

My goal in the sharing of these resources has been to provide you with context for effective processing and reflection on the practices and principles incorporated into the model presented in chapter 4. By this point, I hope that the big picture is falling together for you sufficiently that you are able to use it going forward in evaluating your own practice. In the next and final chapter, we will be looking at implications for how we build the capacity to pass these practices and principles on to future generations, as well as summarizing the many recommendations that have been made throughout these chapters.

6. Looking to the future

In this chapter I will be looking to the future. In section 6.1 I will look at some aspects of what pursuing well-being looks like when the timeline is assumed to be multi-generational. In section 6.2 I will give my final supporting resource, a schedule for a summer camp that illustrates the ideas of section 6.1, along with most of what has been presented in this entire thesis, showing how grounding can be built and then leveraged over a given length of time (in this case, a few months) to strengthen social connections, deepen interaction with stories, and facilitate the provision of agency and ownership over a range of practices including language, storytelling and identity building. Finally, in section 6.3 I will share my recommendations for language workers (largely repeating what has already been stated through chapters 4 and 5), my broader recommendations for how to support the implementation of these types of holistic approaches, followed by some directions for future research. Finally, in section 6.4 I have to say goodbye, thank you for reading, and give my last thoughts.

6.1 Transmitting well-being to future generations

Let's say that you are a member of a community coming out of a dark time, dealing with a legacy of disempowerment, silencing, loss of language, and loss of community. It feels like your youth are in need of professional help emotionally, requiring experts with years of training, and likewise your language is no longer being passed on from generation to generation, and it seems like those doing something about it are dedicating decades of their life to it, and still having a hard time. A person could be forgiven in asking themselves whether a community was sustainable when your long-term marginal well-being depends on sending young people out for decades of education just to maintain a balance. If becoming an expert requires becoming knowledgeable and practiced in all of the skillsets referenced throughout the more than two hundred pages you've just read, then creating our next generation of

experts would seem to be a real challenge. But is long-term sustainability really this complicated? I don't think so, and in the first part of this chapter I'm going to explain some reasons why. Rather than going through all the various principles again, and showing how they can be passed on, I'm going to instead give some examples of how certain practices are being passed on, and look at what implications they have for the community transmission of practices supporting well-being, and language.

6.1.1 Multi-generational transmission matters

Caring about the future is an implicit response to any perspective on life that values connection, and refuses to have artificial boundaries put on that value. If your identity is a function of your connections to the community, including the young, the future matters. If you feel an implicit responsibility being passed on to you as knowledge and values are shared with you by your elders, then the future matters. If you believe that you have a responsibility to maintain a meaningful relationship with the place you and your community inhabit, then the fact that that place will exist long after you are gone means that the future matters.

This perspective is explicitly stated by many Indigenous nations including my own community and my adopted community, who both talk about the idea of a seven-generation perspective, and who both uphold the role of elders in passing on knowledge to the young, as well as holding up the aspiration of becoming an elder to those same young people. I can't remember who said it first, but I have more than once heard it said that Indigenous communities are elder creating machines. I believe it is the centrality of this long view regarding relationship, wisdom and knowledge that means legacy planning and the effective packaging and transfer of teachings and practices are central concerns of the community, and the individual.

Looking at language, it seems clear that simply using cultural workers to share the trappings of

language as a garnish on identity generation after generation is not a long-term solution, either to language restoration, or for the well-being of those same workers. In the case of language, we also want it to become the domain of the community, being able to be self-perpetuating. And in the short term, meaning the next several generations as we rebuild community fluency, ideally the capacity to successfully pass on language can also be passed on outside of the classroom, through the regular communicative practice of the community. At the very least, this is an idea that I believe is worth talking about.

6.1.2 The journey from camper to Rediscovery guide

I've talked about Rediscovery already in section 4.2.5 and 4.3.4. In particular, in section 4.3.4 I talked about how it grounds concrete activities providing agency and grounding in *specific* places and in long-term relationships. In my opinion, this camp is one of the more effective ways communities ensure the survival of the resources needed to facilitate strong identities.

This year, Rediscovery in Bella Coola is planning on doing a fish camp, where a combination of mentors and families will come, harvest a range of fish in appropriate locations, then preserve them themselves and take them home for the winter. This type of camp is something that has happened before and again shows how in some ways the passing on of practices and connections to land and community at a basic level is simple. Just do it. Just work to support it being done. Economic challenges are real, but the solution to those challenges is understood. Access to boats is a real challenge, but we understand how to work towards the solution. Individuals lacking appropriate community connections is real, but we understand what is needed to do to deal with this. For all of these challenges, building community supported activities, encouraging participation, and putting our money as a community where our values are, makes things happen.

When it comes to language, this apparent straight-forwardness is equally true at early stages of language loss. Young people not being exposed to language use? Send them onto the land with speakers or to live with older relatives. People not hearing the language? Invest in radio programming in the language, invest in literacy in the language, and as a community decide to use the language at community events, and to *have* lots of those events.

In all of what I've just suggested, what we are doing is maintaining or building capacity and connections that already exist. Once these capacities exist, they themselves are the vehicle for their continued existence. We don't need to have a course at school that teaches each student how to can fish if everyone learns how to do it with their family. It is when the relationships that support this transmission are stressed to the breaking point, or the resources that support this are taken away, that questions of how to go about building them back up become more complicated.

6.1.3 Going beyond independent reflection through storytelling

For a community that is already living most of its practices, the addition of a new practice may not be that significant of a challenge, but for a community where what has been most heavily impacted is its sense of capacity and agency to act, things can be different. In section 3.2 I went through a lot of the ways that trauma had an impact on not only what we do, but also our capacity to initiate things, or even to learn from new experiences. A sufficiently traumatized community might start to lose the ability to pass on practices, even while engaging in them, as people lose the initiative to continue engaging, or lose the ability to reflect effectively on experiences.

In section 4.2.6.1 I briefly talk about experiential education, one of the fields of practice that directly underpins practices such as the camps supported by Rediscovery International. I remember my first introduction to the field over twenty years ago, when my friends in an Adventure Based Counselling

(ABC) program gave me the following narrative: A young person or a group of young people who have had all agency taken from them are taken into an environment by a mentor, where their decisions matter. They are then invited to make these decisions, for example by being given matches and told that if they make a fire they'll be warm. All of a sudden, their actions and their decisions have meaning – they have agency. This experience is used as the foundation of building new narratives of identity where agency is central. In programs like Rediscovery, the participants become the guides, who then grow into adults in the community. As a result, year by year the program can build a community's awareness and use of its own agency. And as this agency is reinjected into the practices that the community is already passing on, it becomes self sustaining.

This is definitely a somewhat simplistic view of the process, in part because all of these community practices have this component of developing and growing the capacity of youth built into them already. At the same time, young people continue to value these types of programs in part because they are an antidote to the past century and a half colonization and how it has impacted how we do things, including how we practice and pass on our own culture. When we strengthen the narratives of agency in our identities, it can have a much broader impact.

One of the other components of this process that I find especially important is the idea of how we process these experiences (as discussed in section 4.2.6). It is through self-exploration and reflection that these narratives of agency become a part of our identity – and it is through self-exploration and reflection that we learn to express that agency over more and more domains of our lives (see sections 4.3.1-2). In section 4.2.6.2.1 I looked in some detail at how increased agency aligns with capacity to engage in different types of processing, or conversely, how different types of processing invite different levels of agency and engagement on the part of participants. These methods were described as being along a continuum from basic Q&A (little agency) through to independent reflection (full agency). In

conversation with some current and former professors of adventure based counselling, while research continues about how to improve processing, the literature in the field is focused on how leaders or practitioners can more effectively engage with individuals to help them on their journey. When it comes to looking at how individuals can then pass on effective processing skills to others, there is little or no research. The focus is on the individual building agency and processing skills for one lifetime, not on the community building agency and processing skills for all future generations.

When I ask myself how processing has been done in my community or in my adopted community in the past, I do see many of the same methods that have been discussed already in section 4.2.6.2.1, ranging from telling simple stories to consensus governance to extensive practices related to spending time alone in contemplation. I also see practices that are explicitly designed to pass effective processing practices on to the next generation.

In section 4.2.5.2 I talked about Nuxalk elder Clayton Mack's collection of stories *Grizzlies and white guys: The stories of Clayton Mack* (1993). There is one story in particular I really appreciate. Clayton begins the story of a grizzly hunt with the following paragraph, setting the scene for things to start going wrong:

I had another close call. It was at the mouth of the Skowquiltz River. I was all by myself that year. No assistant guide to help me. No one want to come with me that year. Usually, they fight to go with me. That year no one ask me. I had two hunters. I thought I could handle them. It was a spring hunt, end of May now, green grass startin' to get long.

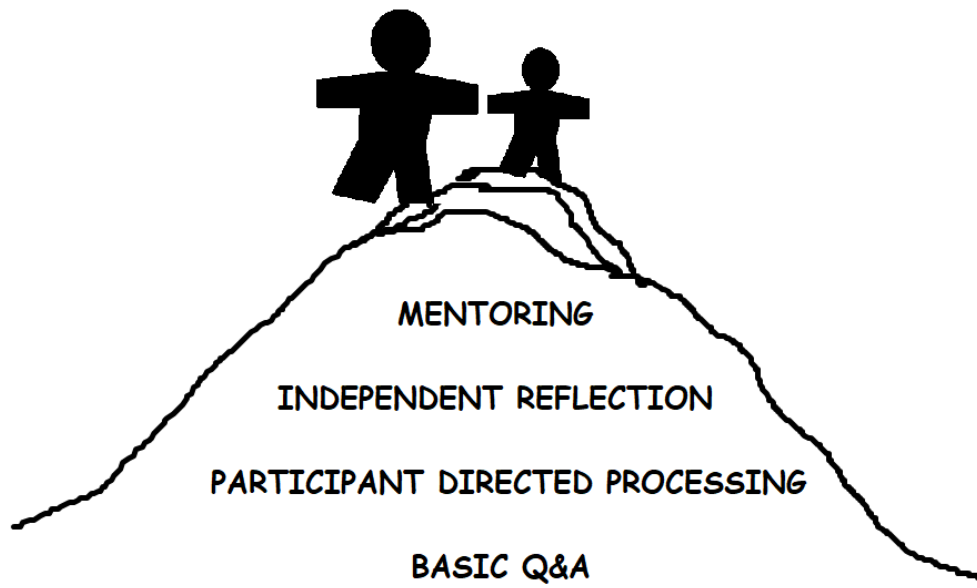
From this beginning, he outlines one misstep after the next, always drawing on the situation laid out in the first paragraph. He's overworked and not making good choices. He can't see in the tall grass. He can't actually handle them. He uses humour to highlight each lapse in judgement, each disastrous

result. He is frank about his thought process, clear about how his emotions pushed and pulled him, and above all completely open and humble. And as I finish reading the story out loud to my boy, I feel the strong urge to now share a story of one of my own adventures, complete with similar reflection and frank humility. And later on, when discussing difficult and controversial community history, the same process leads to an incredible level of care over the presentation of context and motivations, again inviting the listener to the same level of reflection in a situation where lack of reflection could cause serious social harm.

Clayton's story has the advantage of being in print and therefore easy to cite, but this practice of reflective storytelling is common within many communities. I don't know how many times I've listened to my grandfather or uncles share stories of close calls or unforeseen accidents that they should have seen coming. These stories are the result of lived experiences, reflected up on one's own or with others. Following this independent reflection, the storyteller has chosen to lay open their learnings with the listeners, leaving themselves open for further observations and growth, but by doing so taking the processing pinnacle one step further, becoming a mentor or guide to others as they familiarize themselves with their own experiences (see Figure 15).

Figure 15

A Revised Processing Pinnacle



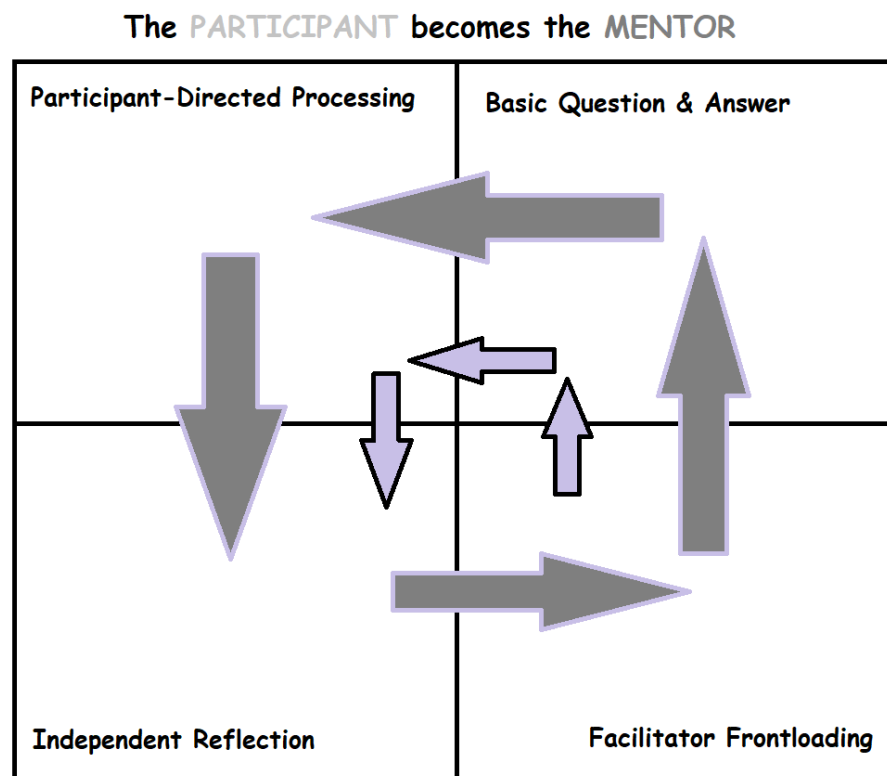
Note. In this revised version of the processing pinnacle, there is a level that is higher than independent reflection – being a guide or a mentor to others on the same journey.

This revised journey towards mastery of processing can be understood as a progression of storytelling – with elders or storytellers telling story after story of place and community to the youth, moving into stories of practices, followed by the youth telling their own stories of practices, and eventually working up to the role of also telling stories of place and family connection (see section 6.2 for examples of this). The mentoring in this type of journey progresses from frontloading relationships and connections, to sharing stories of emotional practices, to guiding group reflections on these practices, eventually circling around to where it is the youth doing their reflection on their own experiences via the medium of sharing stories, before slowly joining in the responsibility of frontloading stories of relationship to the next participants (in this case, their own family members at follow-up

campouts). The journey through the quadrants of processing as discussed in section 4.2.6.2.1 is now even more clearly one of multiple loops, with each type of processing benefiting from different types of mentoring and support (see Figure 16).

Figure 16

A Revised Four Quadrants of Processing



Note. The individual's exploration and familiarization with different levels of processing is followed by a second journey as a mentor, with the role of mentor potentially consisting largely of storytelling in genres that invite response and engagement.

As we pass on practices, skills, knowledge and relationships through this mentoring process, we are simultaneously passing on effective processing practices, including the means of passing them on in

turn to future generations. The various types of stories and contexts for storytelling are what help maintaining voice and agency throughout the process of passing on the skillsets and relationships, including those already discussed in section 6.1.2. And it is this type of mentorship built on processing, usually through story, that allows these practices such as canning fish or hunting mushrooms to transmit agency and a healthy identity, as well as information and material stability.

6.1.4 Turning learners into teachers

When I asked myself the question of how the work of language resurgence can be passed on to future workers, I realized that the implications were different in different scopes. I want to address this question at the level of mentor/apprentice, but also for a classroom or language-class sized group.

Over the past three years I have undertaken both the easiest and the hardest method of language teaching I have ever tried. Namely, I have raised my daughter bilingual, only speaking to her in the language that I teach daily. It's been the hardest thing I've ever done, because I am constantly having to learn new language and think about how to communicate new ideas, but at the same time it's been the easiest because I've had to put very little thought into how to teach – I simply speak, stay engaged with our surroundings and with her, and as time has gone by she has acquired a fluent understanding of the language (though she still chooses to speak English). In section 5.4.4 I briefly touched on how small class sizes lead to contexts where prepared classes lose their function, and instead simply staying engaged as a pair with what is going on around. Within this context, telling stories, asking questions, eliciting responses and opinions are all easy to incorporate into daily routines. Similarly, doing things like documenting our activities and reviewing them can all be easily accomplished.

Mentor/apprentice training has all these same advantages, with the added bonus that apprentices tend to be slightly older, slightly motivated, and usually come into the program with strong

narratives of agency already a part of who they are. This often results in a learning environment that is driven by both mentor and apprentice. In the times that I've been involved with mentor/apprentice programs, the biggest challenges have always come when apprentices do not have that sense of ownership, and for one reason or another expect to be taught the language, rather than to draw it out of the newly forming relationship.

When it comes to instilling this sense of ownership of the learning experience in young people, the method that I have the most respect for is WAYK. On the one hand, WAYK does not claim to be a unified system of teaching with a philosophy of education supporting it (Evan Gardner, 2021, personal communication). It originated out of the realization that for many languages, everybody needed to be teachers, and so the collection of techniques used to gamify language learning and teaching incorporate a lot of methods that help turn learners into teachers. Techniques like *Send It Around* mean that whatever we are trying to say, everyone gets a chance to start and finish the exchange. The technique *Everybody Deals* means that not only does everyone get a chance to speak, but everyone takes turn teaching each new technique, work or activity. Technique after technique builds in effective mentoring, repetition, gradual transfers of responsibility, and there are ample opportunities for new “players” to create their own contexts or use the techniques to teach whatever they feel is valuable, not only language. Learners are quickly given responsibility for “hunting” how to effectively communicate, or for coming up with props to use. My other favourite activity involves all participants using highlighters to mark parts of a text they understand or don't understand, then learning from each other as much as possible before asking an elder or language speaker. Learners learn that the community of learners is their resource, not just one specific teacher or speaker. And when a learner with this educational background is placed in a mentor/apprentice situation, they should have a much easier time accepting ownership and making the project a success. And part of the agency involved is that all participants are

themselves encouraged to analyze their language learning experiences, find problems, and create solutions that can be taught as techniques to others (Gardner & Ciotti, 2018, p. 139).

6.1.5 Inclusivity

One of the core tenants of the Rediscovery programs was that they were to include a mixture of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth from local communities. The resulting relationships represented more than just a cohort of friendships to combat racism and othering, they were a chance for Indigenous youth to understand that while their culture might not have value to government institutions, it absolutely was respected and looked up to by their non-Indigenous peers. And over the past several decades of Rediscovery camps, the connections to community and place formed in these camps have had an indelible impact on not only the youth of the Nuxalk Nation, but also on those non-Indigenous youth who were fortunate to attend as well. What I'm wanting to say with this is this: healing is for everybody, and our stories have the power to have an impact far beyond our local communities.

Taff et al. (2018, p. 878) put it this way: "Which culture is truly the least healthy, the one that suffers from brutality, or the one that brutalizes?" They go on: "the real root of the problem is the sickness of the 'dominant,' 'colonial,' 'Western,' 'pioneer,' 'frontier,' cultures who are the victimizers. What will heal them?" For another example of this message, I look at the only collection of texts from antiquity to come from a colonized culture, the Bible. Detailing one communities' struggles with physical and cultural survival through six separate periods of colonization, each with its own approaches to oppression, the book is a tour de force of writings on what it means to survive and maintain values under oppression, without becoming that which you are resisting. While I know this may not be a dominant perspective, my view of the Christian decision to begin sharing a modified body of stories and practices with the colonizing community as a recognition that the only lasting solution to oppression is to heal the oppressor. The fact that many of these stories were later co-opted into their own colonizing

narratives should not take away from the magnitude and success of this one decision.

Archibald (2008, Chapter 5) describes similar projects with my province of British Columbia, bringing Indigenous storywork into the education domain with the goal of not only bringing healing to Indigenous youth, but also effecting real change in the broader society. Today, Indigenous perspectives are a core component of all subjects within the official curriculum of the province of British Columbia, and I hope to see this not only facilitate the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and stories for Indigenous youth, with the resulting strengthening of connection to place, community, and practices of agency, but also bring a holism and commitment to, and a capacity for engagement within non-Indigenous youth. I would like to see the circle that elder Norman Fleury talked about being connected again in a way that changes all of our social landscape, not just my single community. And in the community where I live, when I see this commitment to holistic education in conjunction with the individual connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous families, represented through marriages, adoptions, and generational friendships, well, it gives me hope not only for my community, but that some day our broader society may make meaningful progress along our communal journey towards healing, both of our society, and of our planet.

6.1.6 Summary

The examples I have given above are just a few of the ways we can ensure that when we invest in building strong identities, we are building for the future of our communities, not creating an education system that has made itself indispensable through some type of institutionalized generational helplessness. By building practices of reflection that young people can both easily absorb from older community members as well as pass on to each other, we ensure that when we engage in passing on our practices and community structures, we are also passing on practices, knowledge and relationships that support an identity that is conducive to well-being. We can treat language resurgence the same way by

incorporating effective mentoring and the ongoing transferal of skills and responsibilities. Doing this we can both support actual success in learning, as well as support collective ownership of responsibility over language, helping it stay in the scope of community members' identities.

These various examples don't negate the current usefulness of professional degrees, experience, active knowledge and experience, but they do point to a future where the work we are doing in our communities, both with language and with other projects focusing on well-being, will be truly self-sustaining rather than representing progress that vanishes the moment the singular personality disappears, or which has to be rebuilt each generation. As time goes on, this expertise will help us build not just a temporary capacity for resilience, but a permanent resiliency grounded in self-sustaining practices.

6.2 Taking advantage of the element of time: Summer camp schedule

One of the movements that I have had the privilege to support has been the Rediscovery program, an outdoor youth program putting a strong place-based and cultural-based twist on the traditions of adventure based counselling or experiential education. It's stated goal is "To discover a philosophy of respect and love ...for Nature; for Each Other; and for Ourselves!" (Rediscovery.org) and as I outlined in the previous section, it has had a meaningful, positive impact on the community where I live, Bella Coola. In *Appendix 6: Sample Summer Camp Schedule* you can read a hypothetical schedule made for a series of campouts that take place in the locations currently used or which have used in the past. This schedule may be hypothetical, but I have created it not solely based on my theoretical desires regarding how things *should* work, but also based on my experiences as a storyteller for youth, as a camp group leader, and on a number of conversations with counsellors, youth, as well as reading and reflection on both the Rediscovery program and other similar programs. The schedule is a slightly modified version of planned events for a summer, showing how over a longer period of time the various

practices, goals, and focuses of a camp can change in order to work towards a single vision of well-being for youth. These camps typically run with campers divided in to groups of eight or nine, with a total of around thirty people, but for the schedule described below, I believe that any number between about ten and forty would be manageable with appropriate staffing.

Through my description of these events, you will see several gradual transitions or progressions. You will see a progression from primarily physically engaging or physically stressful activities towards a more even mixture between physical engagement and social-emotional engagement and risk. Similarly, there is a progression from primarily non-stressful group activities such as singing and games towards activities that require more individual expression and vulnerability. You will see a progression from stories focused on connecting us to the locations and history, towards stories connecting us to community and finally progressing to stories connecting us to each other. You will see a progressive increase in intensity towards ever more meaningful experiences, followed by a decrease in intensity accompanied by increasing opportunities for more meaningful processing and reflection. Finally, you will see a serious progression from activities led and directed by staff, to a time when campers have full agency over activities, planning, events, meaning making, and sharing of these experiences with family and friend. In other words, you will see several of the ways in which well-being is a journey (see section 4.2.4), as well as examples of every other principle discussed so far, though they are so dense and intertwined in this section that I have chosen not to include references to previous sections, as I do not want to unnecessarily separate out what is being put together.

None of these progressions is purely linear, and there are many smaller cycles that function over the length of a single camp, or a single day or even activity. In part this is because often it is the first half of the progression that enables the second half, and *continues* to enable the second half – this is especially true of the various ways that activities ground participants through connection to place,

family, and history. And the inverse is equally true – the progression towards an openness to social vulnerability is built on increased trust, more agency is built on confidence in responsibility, and a greater willingness to tell personal stories is built on a sense of connection, in turn built through both narrative and lived experience. These shifts all represent a progression of the work of grounding and connecting learners in place and to each other, they represent the addition of differently effective methods that can be used once the foundation has been established.

Looking specifically at language acquisition, in all of these camps language is taught not as a separate subject, rather it is built in to routines such as serving food, gathering for circle, doing check-ins or simple processing, and specific parts of certain activities such as swimming or climbing. In addition, some place names and vocabulary are shared in the context of locations or events. While a significant amount of language is taught, one of the primary goals is the interweaving of language into the mix of important relationships that are being established and strengthened. If staff can maintain an attitude of engagement and interest in language, the same attitude is absorbed by the other participants as they gain more linguistic abilities in the context of expressing themselves, building friendships, helping others, and connecting to place, to history, or to practice.

6.2.1 Schedule

The first campout faces challenges similar to the beginning of the year at school, in that we have to establish routines, set expectations for learning, quickly establish healthy relationships between all learners and staff, and of course all stay safe and have a good time. Campers are divided into groups to allow for closer connections to be made. These groups rotate through roles and activities, both with physically engaging activities like hikes and rich experiences, as well as opportunities to act on awareness of others such as camp chores and crafting gifts for each other.

As the camp progresses, we create more opportunities to have meaningful experiences together. We have planned times to share and reflect, mixed in with activities such as meals and singing that draw us together and make sharing easier. We share stories that connect campers to the location, and to their families, and we use planning and discussion of the next campout to connect what we are doing to the future.

The second campout begins with activities more focused on catching up with friends such as swimming and being in the hot springs. We use even more stories that connect the campers to the location, stories of cultural practices that originate here, traumatic experiences and important moments in their community's history. Towards the end of the campout we share more and more stories about their grandparents' lives connected to the place, reinforcing connections to the people not with us on the campout. We continue to normalize using language around all the routines of the camp, with some new place names and deeper check-ins. Over the course of this trip we also try to normalize more camper-involvement in planning activities, including talk of the upcoming "big" trip.

After a break back at home, it's time for the big trip, when we engage in our strongest work with the time to get real depth of engagement. Our long boat ride to camp lets us talk about our hopes and expectations as a group, and all get on a similar page regarding what we hope to accomplish. We also use the journey to get back in to the habit of paying attention and interacting with the locations we find ourselves in.

For the next several days we explore the region where we are camping, climbing high up mountainsides, alongside rivers, canoeing around ocean points and walking through deep forests through remains of villages where their relatives once lived and will live again. Because of our ongoing check-ins, growing practices of supporting and helping each other, and constant sharing of powerful

activities and locations, we find it possible to push ourselves further, building our confidence and sense of teamwork through physical activities and risks, gradually resulting in the ability to take social and emotional risks, building friendships and being more and more able to share our own stories, really letting the activities and experiences become a part of who we are.

As before, the stories we tell first focus on connecting us to the places we see, with all our hikes having features that are tied to specific stories. As the days go by, we move on to the recent history of that community, and to stories tied to people that we have known, as well as institutional memory—stories of previous Rediscovery campouts and their impact going back to the camp's founding 40 years ago. Through this progression we work towards bridging between the lives and experiences of the past, and the lives students are living in the present.

At this point we start engaging in more intense activities, building on agency and practices of reflection that have been built up to that point. We do a group solo, where each group of four or five campers with a staff member spends 24 hours away from camp, taking one potato each for food. This is a time of being alone, with the group or by yourself, and the intense physical activity is now replaced with time to visit and open up with friends. When we return the next day, we then do the most mentally challenging physical activity – cliff jumping! As a whole group we are now able to push our boundaries, while also being able to support each other in our fears, and in being asked to use Nuxalk as we negotiate whose turn it is and what height we will jump from.

That night, those who wish set off for a true 24-hour solo, with a single match and a potato. For those who don't go, each group plans their next day's activities, and we transition from telling stories of the solo adventures of past camps to telling and retelling our favourite experiences from this camp. We also start planning our activities, meals, and choosing the destination of our next campout, giving the

group real agency and significance through meaningful decisions just before we return home.

For our first follow-up camp we return to either the hot springs or to Green Bay, and while the routines remain similar, planning and scheduling is done by the campers during a supper event if not completed the last few days of the previous camp. Evening stories are both connected to place, but mostly focused on building connections and understanding. Ideally, most stories are shared by youth, with help from an elder or staff member if necessary. This return to a shorter and more contained camp is a way of coming down from the high of the previous camp slowly, establishing that the connections we have built will last even after the summer's activities are gone. These final camps are also a chance to cement our uplifting of these youth and to empower them – they have planned the event and can take credit for it.

The final campout continues the work of bringing things together. This camp is fully youth planned, and goes to whichever location we did not go to on trip 4, with campers' families included. A graduation ceremony and an uplifting of participants follows, depending on how many of the children and families are able to attend (if many can't come, we can have graduation as a separate event later on). Campers lead evening activities and stories. This is the final camp, and is an opportunity for the students to share their learning with their families in a tangible way that is also easy for them – they simply continue to share the routines they have absorbed, but are now using their own voices. The various new roles they took on during the camps are ideally being reincorporated into their long-term conceptualizations of self, into their identities, and the presence of their families helps with the reincorporation of new practices into their lives at home.

Reflecting on what can be accomplished in these campouts, I am drawn to how all of these same principles can be applied in my classroom. The cycles of connection and grounding still stretch out

throughout the year, and effective teaching is often built around preparing for significant activities and events, and then reflecting on them. Stories told in the classroom also can transition in focus from month to month, or grade to grade. Perhaps most importantly, agency can be passed on to students, not just in leading out in events, but also in preparing and planning for parent evenings, planning fieldtrips and choosing what knowledge to share with younger learners or with their families. In particular, student planned events result in more parental attendance, encouraging more involvement throughout the year and more learning being taken home. Looking at the camp is also a reminder that how we finish a course, or a year, can play a big role in attitude and retention – without time set aside to consolidate knowledge and build an understanding of what has been learnt, any extra learning that has been crammed in by going intense to the finish can be overshadowed by the abrupt transition.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 A restatement of major recommendations

The following recommendations are a restatement of the main implications of chapters 4 and 5 for language revitalization. These recommendations have already been made in the referenced sections. I have included them here in the order they appeared in the text, both as a review, and as an index for easily finding the discussion that supports and situates each recommendation.

1. *Providing new perspectives.* Teach language in away that provides learners with new ways of seeing themselves, for example by teaching how to use the language to engage in new roles or activities (section 4.2.1.1).
2. *Building group identity.* Develop narratives around your identity as a class, helping students to see themselves as a team, and as learners (section 4.2.1.1).
3. *Adapting other group-building programs.* In order to situate learning in community, adapt

resources that are already target group building for language teaching (section 4.2.2.1).

4. *Tracking student interests.* In order to show students that their actions and voice matters, take notes on student interests and actions in order to assist yourself in referencing them later (section 4.2.2.1).
5. *Showing students that what they and others say matters.* In order to provide lots of examples of people's voices mattering, use group activities where words and decisions impact others, learn through stories of others making a difference with their words, and ensure students give feedback on what topics will be covered (section 4.2.3.1).
6. *Increasing learner agency.* In order to adapt teaching methods and techniques for improving learner well-being, learn how to increase learner agency in the methods you are already using (section 4.2.4.1-2).
7. *Adapting to changes in learner agency.* Recognize that learners' capacity to engage is constantly evolving with age, ability, and openness, and as a result, techniques that don't work today may work tomorrow (section 4.2.4.1-2).
8. *Including language in community events.* In order to build positive narratives around speaking and learning language, incorporate language and stories of language into positive and meaningful pre-existing events (section 4.2.5.1.1).
9. *Recapping common events in language.* In order to introduce more regular group storytelling in language, learn how to describe regular group events, and build the telling into reflection (section 4.2.5.1.1).
10. *Introducing positive narratives of language.* In order to directly combat negative narratives

around language, introduce students to positive narratives, including reflection, early on in their learning experience (section 4.2.5.1.1).

11. *Engaging with stories.* In order to better understand your community's perspective on well-being, engage with your community's stories, both old and new, with well-being in mind (section 4.2.5.3).
12. *Focusing on self-expression.* In order to more easily incorporate stories in your language into a practice of well-being, early on, focus on ways to comment or respond to stories in language, for example questions about emotions (section 4.2.5.3).
13. *Building critical thinking and reflection skills.* In order to help young people develop practices of reflection and critical thinking across narratives, give them responsibilities around reflection, and do activities that compare and contrast experiences and narratives (section 4.2.6.2-4.2.6.2.2).
14. *Building an understanding of the uses of storytelling.* In order to develop agency in processing, gain an understanding of the different ways that storytelling can be used for the processing of experiences (section 4.2.6.2.1-2).
15. *Using language in a variety of domains.* In order to combat divisions between domains of use, incorporate language into as many domains as possible, both in school, via other community institutions, and through supporting use in the home (section 4.3.1-2).
16. *Grounding teaching in community.* In order to increase engagement, ground the subject matter and the practice of your teaching in the stories and practices of the community (see section 4.3.3 as well as chapter 5 for more ways to do this).
17. *Connecting teaching to community knowledge.* In order to increase engagement and build a

sense of grounding, connect the teaching to place and to community knowledge through activities in place, knowledge of practices, and stories of practices and place (see section 4.3.4 for specific discussion).

18. *Understanding language scope and specific challenges.* Helping learners build the skills to engage with a broad range of practices and knowledge means having an understanding of the range of genres of language (see section 4.3.5), as well as a solid understanding of the language specific challenges (see section 5.1).
19. *Focusing early language learning.* In order to encourage programs to build a foundation for learners that allows broad engagement, you can impose limits on the amount of vocabulary you teach related to any one genre or specific linguistic structure. I suspect that an appropriate early limit is enough vocabulary to use each target structure or category of vocabulary in three or four different contexts (see section 5.1.2, and appendix 1).
20. *Placing complex systems into meaningful social contexts.* When teaching complex systems that are usually represented with large charts, thinking about each part of this chart in terms of what social situations naturally call for those statements can provide a way of teaching these systems while still focusing on prioritizing meaning making and agency (see section 5.5-5.5.3, and appendix 3).
21. *Expanding learners' zone of acceptable risk.* Schedule class events, challenges, and projects with an eye to both building community and openness to risk, as well as an eye to taking advantage of these developments (section 6.2).
22. *Passing on ownership of language and learning.* In order to pass on ownership of language learning and help learners reintegrate their learning and growth into their day to day lives, find

ways to give students responsibility for sharing their knowledge with others and their families or communities (see section 6.2 and appendix 6).

6.3.2 Broader recommendations

The following eight recommendations build on these specific recommendations, summarizing the key implications of this dissertation for communities wanting to move in this direction. They reflect areas of perceived need and possible growth, and as a group, they summarize the majority of the key implications of this dissertation.

Recommendation 1: *Communities need to develop a strong understanding of what their vision is for well-being, for the individual, for families, and for the community, both in the short and long term.*

The work of education, of cultural resurgence, or of counselling and wellness programs is all done within a framework of working towards well-being. With this in mind, a clear vision is essential as a guide for workers engaged with every different facet of this work. If this work is done with an understanding of the holistic nature of this work (see sections 1.4.1 or 4.3.1) it opens the door for effective cooperation, as well as new sources of funding, new sources of training that actually makes a difference, and new ways of looking at the varied benefits of community practices and identity.

Recommendation 2: *Language learners, teachers, and communities at large should gain an understanding of the conflicting narratives around language loss and revitalization nationally and within their own communities and families.*

As I discussed in section 3.3-5, there are a wide range of incredibly conflicted narratives about what it means to speak, not speak, or learn our languages. These narratives are a minefield of false expectations, unnecessary responsibilities and damaging pressures. By learning to view this work within the context of resurgence, empowerment, and healing, communities can reduce burnout, build healthier

expectations, and pass on healthy attitudes to the next generation rather than feelings of inadequacy. Confronting these narratives has to be done for each individual through discussions and reflection, it needs to be done at the level of the classroom and school, and it needs to be done at the community level by whatever means necessary in order to change attitudes towards language in the home.³⁶

Recommendation 3: *Language teachers and teacher training programs need to have a clearer understanding of the student as being on a journey towards well-being, including greater agency, greater connection to community and place, and greater capacity to engage with new types of learning.*

As discussed in section 4.2.4, by understanding that learners are not static collections of character traits and learning skills, language teachers can better understand how to support student growth. This leads to a new perspective on language teaching methods, where methods can be understood to be good fits for different learners at different stages. Understanding this progression can guide teachers in meaningfully modifying existing methods to increase learner growth, as well as potentially supporting the development of new techniques, activities, or ways of effectively sharing language.

Recommendation 4: *Teachers, including language teachers, should be supported in cultivating a better understanding of what effective mentoring looks like over time.*

I have often heard people talk about giving responsibility to young people (often in a church setting) but I hear less about how we prepare people for this, and what narratives we attach to it. Drawing on the discussion in sections 6.1.1-4, I believe that teachers would benefit from understanding mentoring in some detail (I know that I would), including preparing the foundation for growth,

³⁶ For more discussion related to this recommendation, see Leonard (2017).

mentoring into practice and agency, and supporting onwards into responsibility and mentorship. This understanding of mentorship gives valuable context for understanding the roles of stories and other genre of language that can be explored in the language, and it also provides important context for understanding the potential benefits of teaching methods such as WAYK in ensuring that the responsibility for language transmission is understood to belong to the community and each community member, not the school or individual teachers.

Recommendation 5: *In connection to mentoring, teachers and learners should develop a better understanding of processing, both in theory and in practice, with an emphasis on how to include it in existing practices.*

Based on the discussion of processing in sections 4.2.6-4.2.6.1.1, and section 6.1.4, I believe that more effective processing can improve language activities, increase retention, build learner agency, be a part of establishing ongoing community agency and well-being, as well as form a foundation for effective mentoring.

Recommendation 6: *In order to help learners build strong abilities to engage with new topics, teachers and schools should support a wide range of relationship building practices, activities, or even programs such as improv.*

Throughout sections 4.2.1-4.2.3 I outlined ways that providing opportunities and examples of engagement and creativity can support learners increasingly understanding themselves to be people who can explore and grow, rather than people defending a core identity through disengaging. By building relationships (sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.3) alongside familiarity and connection to place (section 4.3.5) we can decrease the barrier to engagement in a wide variety of activities, and by increasing the impact of these activities through effective processing (sections 4.2.6-4.2.6.1.1) we can support the growth of

motivated, caring learners. Programs that develop creativity such as improv have a host of activities that can be brought into language teaching, and similar efforts can be made to incorporate creativity at all levels, helping students develop the capacity to feel comfortable using their creativity and agency via language learning methods such as TBLT.

Recommendation 7: *In order for educational institutions and language teachers to support the needs of communities and learners, communities need to invest in serious discussion and reflection about what stories and narratives they value as a part of their identity.*

Throughout this thesis I have talked about the importance of the stories we tell. In section 2.2 I outline a model of narrative identity, and talk about how different stories can give us more abilities to deal with life. Throughout all of chapter 3 I go over ways in which having our stories twisted or even replaced by narratives that do not give agency can result in the destruction of all kinds of connections and practices. Then throughout chapter 4 I go over a wide range of ways that specific narratives can be used to build capacity. This work is worthy of thoughtful effort on the part of a community, even as it is slowly being passed over to the next generation (as discussed in sections 5.6 or 6.1-6.1.4). It can result in thematic outlines for education, in students having a stronger sense of belonging, and in teachers having a sense of security in knowing that a portion of the material being covered is clearly in line with community goals. What this looks like will vary greatly from community to community, and should be rewarding for far more than just education.

Recommendation 8: *In order to support lasting well-being, schools and communities should actively aspire for thriving youth, rather than functioning youth.*

In sections 4.2.6.2 I talked about a goal of establishing reasoning skills, enabling young people to use a wide range of stories in order to make sense of the present. This goal goes beyond making sense of

a current trauma in order to function, instead focusing on recognizing a much larger, long-term goal. This idea of embracing long-term goals is tied into the ideas of grounding identity in purpose (section 4.2.5.2), or of starting youth on the path to developing wisdom and becoming elders (sections 4.3.1-2). This goal is understood to be long term, resulting in multigenerational goals and efforts (section 6.1-6.1.4), as well as multi-generational visions of success (such as discussed in section 1.6). Looking at the big picture allows us to think about goals that are only achievable in the big picture, giving purpose, clarity, and hope on what is arguably a difficult path.

6.3.3 Directions for future research

The following recommendations relate to areas where I see a need for significant future work, ideally supported by research.

Building understanding of learner engagement. Because so much of what I have talked about in this dissertation is related to increasing student engagement, more clear discussion on how teachers can easily measure or evaluate engagement would be useful, given that many of the long-term goals discussed here depend on the development of life-long engagement.

Resource creation support. A large portion of the work suggested by this dissertation is the creation of resources that support engagement with the places, knowledge, and practices of a community. While in an ideal world this would be done through ongoing engagement with elders, in place, via meaningful practices, if this is not immediately possible, then most communities can benefit from both documentation work that is much broader than most linguistic approaches, and from the creation of resources that share this information in variety of ways, targeting learners, families, and teachers. In addition, there is a need for broad community support for the retention of traditional practices, with one of the considerations being the reintroduction of language into these practices. Many of these changes

could be supported by building expectations during the training of linguists, teachers, or administrators.

Integrating subjects. One of the challenges of all this work done to ground language in a variety of subjects is that it creates a lot of overlap with other subjects. While I have looked briefly at some ways to facilitate further integration (at the K-2 level), this type of integration presents a lot of challenges for classroom teachers. My impression is that implementing this broadly and effectively would necessitate a significant change in teacher training, where new teachers are equipped with expectations, skills, models, and other tools that create expectations of doing more integrated projects, as well as equipping them for effective assessment, and for effective use of collaboration time.

6.4 Concluding thoughts

In 2013, as I finished writing my Masters thesis, I stated that the process had had a strong impact on me as a language learner, as a researcher, and as an individual. In 2024 I have found that the process again has had a similarly significant impact on me, as a language worker and teacher, but also in most aspects of my life.

I've already outlined many of the ways that this thought process has changed how I've taught, or what I have aspired to in teaching. In addition to this, having a deeper understanding of what we are trying to accomplish with cultural resurgence or the pursuit of well-being has allowed me to appreciate the expertise of my colleagues and others as I am now able to see the skill with which they navigate the emotions and needs of young people.

In this thesis I have also talked about the importance of increasing the scope for the natural application of our identity and values, our agency, as we grow in our ability to learn and engage (section

4.3.1). I have experienced the same growth as I've been able to explore the shared goals, values, and operating principles of a wide range of movements or fields, many of which did not make it into this thesis.

Throughout this research I have reflected in depth on my practices as a teacher, at times finding and appreciating positive practices that I was intuitively embracing, but more often than not finding ways that I was not in alignment with my own values. This interrogation of my own life has taken place in many other domains, and I'm sure I'll thank myself some day.

I have similarly talked about the importance of genuinely paying attention to my students if I wish to show that they matter. Years of attempting this has been a blessing beyond words as I now count a lot of young people as my friends, even if I never seem to have enough time to spend with them as I would like. With the research and writing of this dissertation now behind me, this is at least one thing I hope to be able to improve on quickly, as my wife, my children, and my students will hopefully all see a bit more of me over the coming years.

My final messages to you, the reader, are these. My first message more of a comment. This really seems like a big document, but in reality I have only aimed for some level of comprehensiveness in one aspect – I have tried to ensure that chapter 4 sufficiently illustrates the implications of pursuing a narrative identity that supports well-being, as outlined in the conclusion of chapter 2. So while I am very confident that after finishing this work you will be able to engage in useful reflection on the impacts of your practices, I have not in any way been comprehensive in my application of this model to the entire field of language teaching, which is massive. In other words, I have only talked about a small fraction of the methods, techniques and resources that are out there being used right now.

Second, I'm sure that trying to absorb all that I have said will change you, but it doesn't make it

easy. I'm not really any more gifted as a teacher than I was a few years ago, I just am slightly better at being hard on myself, and I have some more clarity. The work of becoming the teacher I want to be will still be the work of the remainder of my career, and hope that this thesis will help you on your own journey towards that goal.

Third, thank you for reading this.

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Further reading

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Chapter 1 Further reading

I have included only a handful of references for this chapter, all books that have had an outsized impact on my worldview, in particular as it relates to the integration of our lived experiences into a coherent and adaptive worldview. These are books that explore narratives of how we mentally relate to the world around us, and the impact these narratives can have on a broader level. In addition, I have included citations referencing the corpora of unpublished recordings and interviews that I have conducted with language speakers over the years while working on language documentation. Both creating and listening to these recordings has been personally transformative.

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Chapter 3 Further reading

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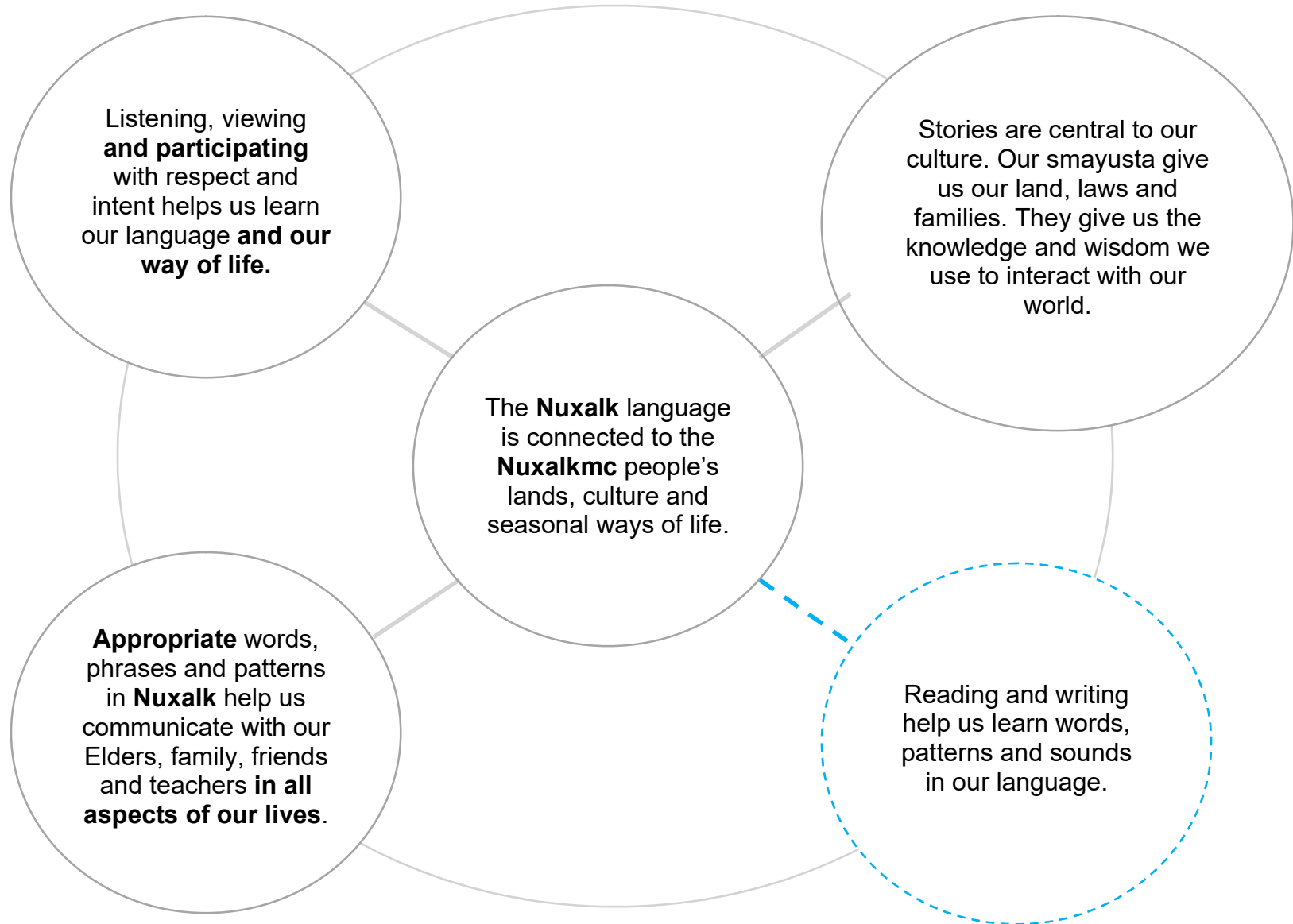
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Appendices

The following appendices are the result of my own work and reflection, though with expected input from fellow teachers and community where appropriate.

Appendix 1: Level 1 Curriculum. Big Ideas



Big Idea: The Nuxalk language is connected to the Nuxalkmc people's lands, cultures and seasonal ways of life.		
Curricular Cultural Vision <i>all curriculum will have the following as its goals</i>	Content <i>In order to achieve this goal, students will need to know the following:</i>	Outcomes
Note <i>This final big idea is predicated on the principle that the definition of well-being is something that communities can define for themselves. The following is derived from a much larger and more elaborated document developed by the Nuxalk Ancestral Governance Project to be an aid to Nuxalk education. This "Big Idea" is not one that ever ends.</i> ➤ To give our students the tools and education they need to be stl'mstaliwa – having dreams and plans for themselves and their communities and their territory, and having the resources in terms of family, education, resources, and will to pursue them.	Wa mus wa slhiixutsta – the four treasures ○ Smayusta – their origin stories, the right to belong. ○ Klhalhta – the right to ancestral inheritance and the past ○ Tcamatlhh – places of origin – the right to live and sustain a livelihood on ancestral land ○ Kw'alhtnta – the right to family and to identify with the crests Nuxalk Lifeways ○ Season change and events, including weather, animal and sealife behaviour, and traditional and modern skills and practices as they connect us to this world. ○ The stories of previous generations that connect us to our slhiixutsta and our lifeways.	Wa slhiixutsta – the treasures Smayusta ▪ Students are secure in their identity and in their relationships. ▪ Students are unafraid to learn and apply new knowledge Klhalhta ▪ Students can draw lessons and strength for the present from the experiences and stories of their community in the past Tcamatlhh ▪ Students have a sense of belonging to place and community, developed through knowledge of place, history, and through the creation of new memories and experiences in place Kw'alhtnta ▪ Students are aware of their own families, their relationships to others and other families, and understand how those relationships are built and maintained. Nuxalk Lifeways ▪ Students are aware of the world around them and the significance of both seasonal change and a changing world to themselves, their daily and seasonal activities, and their community.

Big Idea: Listening, viewing and participating with respect and intent helps us learn a language and our way of life.		
Curricular Competencies <i>Students are expected to demonstrate the following:</i>	Content <i>In order to demonstrate these competencies, students will need to know the following:</i>	Proficiency Examples
Listening and Viewing and Participating ➤ Actively participate in group activities in order to develop a sense of belonging to the class and their community ➤ Listen actively and pay attention during activities in order to better understand interactions and narratives in the language. ➤ Demonstrate participation through responding with attention, action, sign, and or word. ➤ Follow group safety expectations when on the land or participating in activities ➤ Apply these competencies, with assistance, to guests who visit the class	Communication strategies ○ Turn taking in speaking ○ Active listening ○ Using greetings ○ Displaying, recognizing and naming emotions Phonemic Awareness ○ Differentiate tɬ', k', long and short vowels. ○ Differentiate various WAYK signs Participation skills ○ Show understanding of TPR expectations during appropriate activities ○ Demonstrate understanding of the expectations and structures of different games, activities, and routines. ○ Safety expectations	▪ Can pay attention when asked... ▪ Responds to classroom expectations ▪ Respond immediately to teachers' when out on walks or in the forest <i>Note</i> These expectations will often be individuated in part to specific students' needs, and are more general expectations that will be worked towards consistently than separate goals that can be evaluated on their own.

Big Idea: Appropriate words, phrases and patterns in **Nuxalk** help us communicate with our Elders, family, friends and teachers in all aspects of our lives.

Curricular Competencies <i>Students are expected to demonstrate the following:</i>	Content <i>In order to demonstrate these competencies, students will need to know the following patterns & some words in the following categories:</i>	Proficiency Examples <i>These are sample examples.</i>
➤ Recognize both regular sentence patterns and focused sentence patterns (commonly used in answers to wh- type questions)	○ Yes/no question patterns with the affix –a (yes/no), as well as with with tic-a – is it..., wic-a – are they..., including appropriately used articles (ti ____ tc, tsi_tsc - the). ○ Aw, axw – yes, no.	○ Respond appropriately to yes/no questions (either with single words or with simple sentences) ○ Respond with words or gestures to wh questions, and understand staff answers to these questions
➤ Identify and recognize objects described using colours, basic adjectives, and numbers up to five. ➤ Can understand these descriptive words used in a range of contexts, including when used with a range of categorizing suffixes, and can at times also organize or recognize objects based on these categories.	○ Colours in Nuxalk (ts'xwliwa – light-coloured, sk'cliwa – dark-coloured, ts'xw - white, mukw - red, sk'c - black, qwli – green/yellow, qwit - blue, mnts' – yellow, the question alh7alatsicwaqw's7iks? – what colour is it?) ○ Basic adjectives (lhkw' - big, qiqti - small, tsakw - long, ktl'i - short, tskw - heavy, cwaacwi - light, tl'axw – hard/stiff, lhulhp - soft, ixw - far, iklhii - near, ya - good, sc - bad, kws - rough, usyayik – smooth, tkw – dirty, kulhya – clean, kanusyam - delicious). ○ Numbers 1-5 (smaw, lhnus, asmus, mus, ts'icw). ○ Names of some common objects (t'xt - rock, stn - tree, slaws - grass, qulhquulhta – pen/pencil, milta - eraser, alhqulh - book, stntnii -stick, qup'ta - drum, paaqi7yala - box, yalquulh - ball, lhalas - boat, qwanilh - spoon, inip'utststa – fork, qw'xwmtimut – vehicle, mila – staff) ○ Outdoor objects (tl'uk' – moon, snx – sun, sk'inwas – cloud, niixw – fire, micmik'lh – star, ipts – moss, ○ Animals in Nuxalk (smlhk-fish, nan-grizzly, tl'a-blackbear, wats'-dog, tsitstsiipii-bird, tl'aqulhik-turtle, lamatu-sheep, alhxapaliikw-horse, yaki-mountain goat, mamayu-butterfly, matskw'-frog, papink-snake, musmus-cow, scwpanilh-deer) ○ Categorizing suffixes (-uulh – rocks/round/houses/vehicles, -aalh – feet, travel, vehicles, dishes, -ak – hands/work, -liits – skin/bark, nu- - people, -anlh – cloth) ○ Counting suffixes (-aw – animate plural, nu- -aw – people plural, -liits – clothing, -aalh – vehicles)	▪ Respond to yes/no questions about characteristics. ▪ Respond to wh questions such as “what is this?” “how many X?” “What colour is X?” “What is X like?” “which is the big X?” ▪ Categorize objects by characteristics. ▪ Identify objects, animals or people based on description in a range of contexts. ▪ Can count objects in various categories.

➤ Be able to recognize similarities and understand statements comparing objects, animals or people.	○ The suffix –timut, and the verbs alh7ay-be/do like, ayuts (say like). Also related words – alhaklitimut (behave proper), yatimut (behave well), acwsalctimut (learn).	▪ Mimic sounds/behaviours of different people or animals or objects if asked to. ▪ Understand when objects or behaviours are being compared and can generalize
➤ Understand and follow some directions regarding how actions are done – adverbial clauses	○ Action category suffixes (-ak – by hand, -alh, by leg/foot, --uts/uuts, by mouth) ○ Describing action verbs (nucs – quiet, nucstimut -to act quiet, nucsalthimut – to walk quietly, ists'iis – loud, ists'iistimut -to be being loud, ists'uutsiitimut -to be speaking loud, tl'i – quickly tl'yaktimut/tl'yalhtimut – to work/walk quickly, ayk'liwa – slowly, ayk'alhtimut/ayk'utsiitimut/ayk'aktimut – to be slow with foot/mouth/hand)	▪ Respond to appropriate commands during group activities like walking, drumming, or singing.
➤ Respond to and use intransitive/possessive pronominal endings in a range of contexts ➤ Respond appropriately to some demonstrative and non-demonstrative pronouns	○ –ts – I/my, -nu - you/your, Ø/s – he/his, -aw/-naw – they/their ○ T'ayc – this(m), t'awtc - that by you(m), ts'ayc – this(f), ts'awtsc- that by you(f), ats-these, awcts-those by you. ○ Tc – he/it, tsc – she.	▪ Answer questions about what they or someone else is doing or what they look or feel like, or respond yes/no to cues. ▪ Be able to follow the subject of a story when pronouns are being used
➤ Identify and respond to simple commands involving some body parts using both individual words and suffixes	○ Body description words (tlh - strong, tmsc - weak, kma - sore, cm - broken, sak'am - injured) ○ Body part suffixes (-ak lower arm, -alh lower leg, -iixw head, -us face, -uts mouth, -ank side, -ik back, -lxs nose, -ulh body) ○ Verbs that involve these suffixes (ip'- take, ks- pull, apcw- lift, q'ilh- scratch, tsi- extend, quts'- wash, sp'- hit, tc- cut, cm- break, mus-touch) plus suffix –ayc (perfective or having a...) ○ Body part names (t'nxw-head, suca-hand, ica-foot, musa-face, tsutsa-mouth, kulhank-side, asank-front, kulhulhik-back, maaxsa-nose)	▪ Follow commands (eventually without contextual clues) about interacting with own body using verbs and suffixes: quts'alhm! – wash your feet! ▪ Respond to questions or statements about the state of body parts: kmayaaknua? – is your arm sore?
➤ Recognize and respond to questions regarding various family and community members.	○ Question words (waks-who, wanuks-who are you, waltstumtiks- what are you called? Waltstumks t'ayc? What's he called?) ○ Family words (man-father, stan-mother, qw'alm-older sibling, suuxi-younger sibling, susqwimtmacw-siblings, kikya-grandma, kukwpi-grandpa, sisi-uncle, sisksum-aunt, mna-child) ○ Person words (imlk-man, cnas-woman/wife, imimlkii-boy, cncnasii-girl, tl'msta-person, acwsalctnm-teacher, staltmc-chief, smatmc-friend) ○ Story characters (masmasalaniixw, alhkw'ntam, Scnts')	▪ Can identify their own family members or even the family members of their peers. ▪ Recognizes when person words are being used to characterize/categorize other people, characters or family members.

➤ Respond to questions about feelings and needs, and recognize these words in other contexts	○ Emotion words (ya-good/okay, axw ya-s-not good, yuum-shy, sclikt-angry, yayaatwii-happy, paaxu-afraid) ○ Body need words (yallak-sleepy, xlhalhh-hungry, smqla-thirsty, anukw'pt-full(of food), nukwlc-hot, nusk'lc-cold, kmalayc-sick, aaxqayalus-need to pee)	▪ Can associate feeling terms with facial expressions and behaviours in themselves and others. ▪ Can imagine and connect with the emotions of others in activities or in stories
➤ Be able to observe and respond to questions about the weather	○ Weather terms (alhwlaah – rain, asuk' – windy, k'aym – snowing, yayaltwa – good weather, sk'inwasliwa – cloudy, nukwluts – hot weather, nusk'luts – cold weather.	▪ Can relate how they feel or their body needs to the weather. ▪ Can answer questions about how the weather might impact our clothing choices ▪ Can connect weather to seasons or compare with the past.
➤ Understand and respond to body actions using a range of action words, in a range of contexts	○ action words (lhm-stand, mt-sit, sqw'-jump/fly, tl'ap-go, putl'-come, lip'tsut-return, nulikw'tsut-turn, tsay-stop, alhi-be/reside, usqa-exit, ustcw-enter, tsitumlc-go to sleep, tculh-nus7apsta-go to the toilet, kw'na-point) ○ ongoing action words (alhilhm-standing, mtii-be sitting, anustsayanm-listen, qup'a-drum, alhps-eat, alh7alhtsim-speak, smsma-tell stories, nuyamlh-sing, naaxwm-dance, alhi-come here, ixq'm-walk, tl'ikm-run, tsituma-sleep, xwism-play, ksnmak-work, kwnm – fetch ○ imperative forms: (x – lhm! Stand! Na – alhina! come here!)	▪ Can follow and mimic the action described in a story ▪ Understand and answer questions such as stamks wa kstucw/kstus? What are you/he doing? ▪ Can recognize and follow commands in the language.
➤ Understand that prefixes (sometimes with additional suffixes) can turn nouns into action words, and be able to understand and use some of these words in a range of contexts	○ Prefixes: (kalh- to hunt 'kalh-nan' to hunt a bear, is/as- to consume – is-slaws – to eat grass, it/as- to wear, as-mukwanlh – to wear red clothing, clh- to have – clhwats' – to have a dog, tam- to make – tam-niixw – to make a fire ○ Suffixes (both create transitive verbs): (-tu- causative tam-qluq'stu- to make eyes on s.o., -am- as-nup-am- - to put a shirt/dress on s.o.) ○ Clothing words (kuut-coat, qinx-shoe, sum-pants, nup-shirt/dress, ts'up'akt-glove, its'amnii-blanket)	▪ Follow commands and answer questions about clothing in a range of contexts ▪ Follow directions or answer questions about things being made during crafts or in stories. ▪ discuss animal and person behaviour regarding food. ▪ Understand and answer questions about possessions
➤ Understand and respond to spatial and temporal terms in a range of contexts	○ Preposition (alh txw-there/then, ala ats-here, ula ats-to here, c-ats – right here/now, ulhtxw-to there, alh-at, ulh-to) ○ Generic time words (alhaysyts – now, -ts'n – now, alhtunica – yesterday, kaynucs – tomorrow, etc.) ○ Locations words (ala asqats-outside, ala astcw ts-inside, ala asikaax ts-in the forest, ala anuxum ts-in the river, ala sulut ts-in the channel, alh ti smt tc-on the mountain, ala sulh ts-at the	▪ Follow commands involving destinations and movement ▪ Retell/demonstrate understanding of the geography of stories ▪ be able to recognize that place terms can be relational to

	- house, ala apsulh ts-in town, ala kulhuuts-on the beach) ○ Relative location words used with possessive suffixes (ala kulhank-beside, ala kulhulhik-behind, ala asank-in front of, ala tl'uk'ank-above, ala tqnkank-underneath, ala tcitskwank-on the other side, ala amat-in the place) ○ Classroom and school places (nus7apsta-toilet, acwsalcta-school, nuxwismalsta-gym, numutsta-door, tipl-table, tsya-chair, kulhulmc-ground/floor, kulhals-wall, winta-window, mnmnta-road, q'lax-fence, nuxwismta-playground)	different objects or individuals. ▪ Can follow narratives without places being explicitly re-stated constantly, and understands as locations/scenes change. ▪ Can compare in some way the past (yesterday's weather, or who was here) to the present.
➤ respond to commands regarding manipulating various objects in a range of meaningful situations ➤ Can respond to or make some requests involving 1st and 2nd person objects (including independent objects)	○ Transitive verbs (ip'-take, kwtl'-put, cwpakm-let go of, tayamk-throw, lis-push) ○ Transitive verbs commonly used with 1s and 2s objects (tsyus – pass to s.o., tl'aptu – to take s.t. to, putl'tu – bring, alh7awlh- to follow, t'ksnic- to shoot s.o., nap- to give s.o., wal- to leave s.o., lhkw'm- to love s.o., alhpstu- to feed s.o.) ○ Singular transitive pronouns (regular/causative): (-its/ts, -icw/cw, -is/s, -tss/ms, -tst/mt, -tsinu/minu, -tscw/mcw ○ Prefixes as-, and transitivizing suffix –am (put on), tu- ○ Independent pronouns (nts – me, inu – you)	▪ Can respond to requests to take objects to people, or understand if they are the recipient of items. ▪ Can understand as staff describe their actions interacting with each other and with students, and at times can follow some commands to do the same.
➤ Can recognize and respond to language involving the senses or attitudes	○ Verbs of perception or attitude (k'c-see, acwsnic-hear, mus-touch, lhut'-smell, yanic-like, usyam-like taste, yanic- to like). ○ Food items and smells (iixm-stink, snknic-food, saplin-bread, kusi-potato, at-herring roe, nuxwski-soapolallie, qla-water, apls-apple, ilk-(wild)rice, pitsa-pizza, mlk-milk, spus-leaf/lettuce, sqaluts-fruit/berries, ts'na-nettles, nuxslcta-junk food)	▪ Can answer questions about their perceptions. ▪ Can express their likes and dislikes.
➤ Can understand and respond appropriately to the language used in the daily and weekly routines of our program	○ Greetings: Yaw-hi. Way-ok. Anana! Ouch. Na! here! axwtxw! Don't! ka k'ctsinumatuts, cya. alhkukwmanu! Goodbye! Alhku! By! ○ Compliments: Yayuutsnu-well said!, yayaaklhnu-well done!, ○ Common commands: ayuts7isu! Repeat!, anayknua ska...do you want to... ○ Food routines, entry/exit routines, washroom routines etc.	▪ <i>This is covered under the second big idea, however I have included it here as well.</i>

Big Idea: Stories are our culture, and connect us to our land, and to our personal, family, and community identities.

Curricular Competencies <i>Students are expected to demonstrate the following:</i>	Content <i>In order to demonstrate these competencies, students will need to know the following:</i>	Proficiency Examples
Storytelling ▪ Knowing the typical rhetorical moves of a story ➤ Be able to recognize Nuxalk words learnt elsewhere when used in stories or in songs, with assistance ➤ Connect stories to places, seasons, and characters ➤ Retain the stories they are learning ➤ Be able to retell some stories in their own words outside of the school environment ➤ Be able to put their own experiences into narrative form ➤ To be able to sing along with some simple songs.	○ Some vocabulary relating to storytelling (tsut-say, alhtsim-talk, patsalh-first, aluux-after, s7aymis-always, anayk ska – want to) ○ Some vocabulary from specific songs and stories ○ Retelling strategies	▪ be able to identify when a story is starting, getting towards the end, or finished ▪ Express expectations about what should be happening in a story ▪ Retell a story at their home or elsewhere ▪ Recognize characters and settings in different stories ▪ Associate stories with places or characters

Learning Standards

Big Idea: Reading and writing help us learn words, patterns and sounds in a language.

Curricular Competencies <i>Students are expected to demonstrate the following:</i>	Content <i>In order to demonstrate these competencies, students will need to know the following:</i>	Proficiency Examples
Reading and Writing (Optional!) ➤ Recognize a selection of letters that are shared between the Nuxalk and English alphabet	○ For example, learn the name of an animal that has a letter in common with their names. ○ Be able to differentiate between known letter shapes and pass them/move them using commands.	▪ “I’m Paul, and my name begins with P like Papink!” ▪ Lis-tx ti “P” tc ulh t’awtc! ▪ Kaks ti “A” tc? Tic-a t’ayc ti “A” tc?

Appendix 2: Unit Plans

Colours Explained: Activities/Vocabulary focused on different ways of using language	
Categories These categories are not meant to be limiting, but to encourage awareness of why things are being taught, and to suggest possible methods.	Description The categories lumped into this colour are central to students being able to use the language in conversation, to talk about themselves, feelings, etc. The heart of our main learning objectives tend to be tied in with mastering these words, including body suffixes and most question/answer words.
Information These short texts are intended to support teaching kids about new concepts. This is a different way of presenting words from narratives or purely from describing what is seen.	TPR/Action words TPR represents yet another way to interact with language. Remember that all vocabulary introduced this way is also likely to be used to describe actions (in narrative) or also while teaching about actions and behaviours (information).
Narrative This category includes our chosen stories, and words that tend only to be used in narratives. It represents a third way of using language.	Transitive a subset of action words that requires deliberate planning to teach.
Vocabulary primarily used to support the above methods	Personal/Social This category includes a very wide range of vocabulary and concepts. While many of the other activities are centered on giving students input related to specific language skills, <i>this</i> group is focused on giving students and teachers the ability to use the language in specific needed daily domains. While as much as possible these goals are dovetailed with other goals, the main goal is the social development of students, in conjunction with language acquisition and use with their peers and staff.
Nouns These various person/place/thing words are mostly used in one of the top group of categories. I have also lumped relevant question/answer structures that can form their own specific activities.	
Locations This category deals with most prepositional phrases, and includes landforms, classroom places, and relative location words, as well as some related questions/answers.	
Notes All of these categories are going to overlap. Language supporting argument, more complex phrase structures, and much more is not included here, though would for older, more advanced learners. For those other learners, other language skills would also be included to support healthy expression of identity.	

WEEK ONE (AFTER REENTRY) TEACHER GUIDE

About: This guide is intended to give weekly language goals. I have given these goals both as aspirational goals (try to teach alllllll of this!) and also limiting goals (try not to go beyond this!). The language selected is chosen to complement the teaching of the story, and the story has been created to support the learning of the other classroom language.

While as language staff we will always do our best to stay in Nuxalk in the classroom, it is my thought that the language presented in these outlines will be the language and structures that we do our best to *actively teach* through games, activities, circle, props, stories, etc., in contrast to words and language which we will simply use around the students, and teach as the opportunity presents itself. If we are preparing activities or circles, they should be focused on the language from the following page.

Using this guide: After choosing which activities each staff member will work on, estimate on the time it will take, and then as a group schedule in your activities into the weekly planner on the following pages. Add descriptions of your activities to the binder with the appropriate week.

About week one: This week starts off with a bang, doing deliberate activities targeting many of the important language concepts of the whole year. Goals are to use language in multiple environments.

Activity guides: **1. Learning About:** Use images to present these stories teaching about Birds and Bears. Limit your presentation of these texts to the extent to which you can illustrate it.

2. Question/Answer patterns. Yes/No questions and “stamks t’ayc?” Yes/no questions will be a part of many interactions through the day, for example “xlhalhnuu? Or “ixq’mnuu?”. For teaching “tic t’ayc ti ____ tc” have at least two items present, tell students what they are, then ask them afterwards, either asking correctly or not. Use follow-up yes/no questions when students don’t immediately answer in Nuxalk.

3. Body parts. What activity has kids interacting with their body? Example activities are “where is the spider?” – *kaks wa amats ti nuq’ilhaaxta tc?* in “qiqipi language outline”. Another activity could involve interacting with pictures or models of animals or people.

4. family members: This week the words to focus on are kikyā and kukwpi. One possible activity would be to ask parents to send us pictures of kikyās and kukwpi, then ask who they are and connect them to people. We might use language like “tsic ts’ayc tsi kikyās Mila!” but our goal is for them to learn the word “kikyā”.

5. Locations. This might not require a special activity, just be aware of the different times you can use “alh” during the day, from “*alh ti tipl*” to “*alh ti numutsta tc*” or “*alh ti tsya tc*” or “*ala kulhulmc ts*”. Try and say those words slowly, and if the situation is obvious, give choices. This can also combine with “body parts” with “*alh ti tsutsa tc*” and “*alh ti uts’aax*”

6. description words. What are hands-on ways of having students interact with these colours and numbers? Choose appropriate bins and

activities. If using rocks or balls, use the question “*alh7alatsicwaqw’siks t’ayc?*” then use the follow-up questions “*sk’c-a t’ayc?*” *Ts’xw-a t’ayc?* Always using your hand to show which pile is which. Only after children have chosen the right pile, do you use *-uulh*, as in “*aw, sk’cuulh t’ayc.*” For the children, this “*uulh*” will just start to mean “Rock” or “ball” to them as we use it, and they will learn it much like learning a noun. Count items that don’t use suffixes.

7. Emotion words: These words are very important through our story and our day. As we plan activities ask yourself: what props can I use? What games can I use? How can I ask children about themselves? How can I ask them about each other? How can I ask them about me? We will be using the question “*alh7alatsicwliwanuks?*” how are you? And “*alh7alatsicwliwaks t’ayc?*” how is he? Covid words: we teach how to ask if someone is sick, and also mime how to cough properly, with the word.

8. weather. Limit to two items. Question *alh7alatsicwliwaks wa suncw ats?* Can be done at circle, or beginning of outside time with props

9. TPR – use normal TPR techniques. Know that *sqw’* and *putl’* will be a part of the story. *Putl’* may be better taught another way than TPR, but let’s find out if we can!

10. classroom words: We use many many words to encourage or direct students. These three will be a part of our story, so making their meanings clear to students week one will be useful. One idea is to use them with each other deliberately in front of students for example in TPR or circle times.

11. entry and exit. While we will still use all the language we have learnt around entry and exit, if possible, use these four words outside of the entry. One idea is to have a large pair of shoes that kids put on when helping or doing something in circle, then use “*asqinxamx!*” and “*ksaalhmxc qinx ats!*”

12. outside play words. Giving and taking objects. Find something that kids want to hold... for example, a kitten :D

13. eating words. We use a wide range of language with eating. Please focus on these words. *Alhps*, *xlhalhh*, *anayk*, all these words are or will be in our story, as are yes/no questions. An activity or interaction that describes other students eating can make things clearer, for example after snacktime, a video of simon’s cat eating, where we say all the same words but then answer for the cat – “*xlhalhha ti puspūsii tc?*” *Aw, xlhalhh. Anayk ti puspūsii ka klip*” etc. If possible, use these words both during snack, but also create the opportunity to use these words *not* during snack or meal time.

14. Time words. Words like “*alh ti suncwt*” can be used after “*alh7alatsicwliwanuks?*” as well as with the calendar questions.

15. Story: This is the first half of the story of bird and bear. Ask yourself the following: 1) what props do I need? 2) what questions can I ask in the language to engage students? 3) are all the concepts in this story also being covered in another activity? Are students following the story? How am I checking? Try to be able to tell the story using a range of methods.

Week One (after gradual re-entry)

1. Learn about

Tsitstsiipii t'ayc. Mtii ti tsitstsiipii tc alh ti stn. Ts'xw ti tsitstsiipii t'ayc. Sk'c ti tsutsas ti tsitstsiipii tc. Sqw' ti tsitstsiipii tc. xhahh ti tsitstsiipii tc. alhps ti tsitstsiipii tc.

This is a bird. The bird sits in a tree. This bird is white. This bird is black. The bird flies. The bird is hungry. The bird eats.

Nan t'ayc. Mukw ti nan tc. mukw ti uts'aaxs ti nan tc. sk'c ti maxsas ti nan tc. ixq'm ti nan t'ayc. Alhps ti nan tc. Axw xhahh ti nan tc.

This is a grizzly. The grizzly is red/brown. Its bum is red. Its nose is black. The bear walks. The bear eats. The bear isn't hungry.

2. Question/answer patterns

– yes/no (-a?) and “stamks t'ayc?”

Tic t'ayc ti _____ - this is a _____.

Stamks t'ayc? – what is this?

snx-a t'ayc? smlhk-a t'ayc? Is this the sun? A fish?

3. body parts

Uts'aax – bum

Tsutsa – mouth

Maxsa – nose

5. locations

Alh ti paqi7yala tc – in the box

Alh ti tipl tc – on the table

Alh ti stn tc – in a tree

Astamks ti ____ tc? Where is the ____?

6. Description words

Colour words

Ts'xw – white

Sk'c – black

Numbers

Smaw, lhnus, asmus

Counting erasers, etc.

Endings

-uulh – rocks and balls

4. Family Members

Kikya – grandma

Kukwpi – grandpa

Waks ts'ayc? Who is this?

Waks t'ayc? Who is this?

7. Emotion words

- Yayaatwi – joyful
- Paaxu – scared
- Scliht – angry

Covid words

- Kmalayc – sick
- Axxut – cough

8. describe weather

Yayaltwa – good weather

Alhwlalh – raining

9. TPR and verbs

Ixq'mx! – walk

Sqw'na! – fly, jump

Lhmx! – stand

Mtx! Sit down

Tsayalh! – stop

Putl'x! – come

Axtxw ____ - don't ____.

Kwanat – cry

10. Classroom words

Yayaaknu! – well done!

Axw yas alh7aynu – that's not good behaviour

Axwtxw! Don't!

Alhinaw7it! Everyone come!

11. Entry and Exit

Sikw'iktsutx! – line up

Asqinxamx! – put on your shoes

Ksaalhm! – take off your shoes

ula umatstus! – to where it belongs

12. outside play words

Tsyustsx! Pass it to me!

Na! – here you are!

13. Eating

Anayknua ka _? Do you want some_?

Xlhalhnua? – are you hungry?

Tscwlcts'n ska alhpsilh! Time to eat!

Quts'akmx! Wash your hands!

14. time words

Alh ti suncwt – today

Kaks ti suncw t'ayc? What day is it?

15. STORY *Stsqaaqa n Nan – part 1*

Tic t'ayc ti tsitstsiipii. Stsqaaqa t'ayc.

This is a bird. It's a wren.

Tsic ts'ayc tsi kikyaa ti tsitstsiipii. Kikya ts'ayc!

This is the bird's grandma. It's grandma!

Xlhalhh tsitstsiipii.

Bird is hungry

Ka putl's ti snx tc, alhps tsitstsiipii ca smlhk alh ti paqi7yala.

When the sun comes, the bird eats fish in a box.

Way, ixq'm tsitstsiipii ulh ti paqi7yala tc. Axw ka smlhk!

Okay, bird walks to the box. No fish!

Sclikt tsitstsiipii. "Kikya!!!! Anaykts ka smlhk!"

Bird is angry. Grandma!!!! I want fish!

Axtxw kwanatnu tsitstsiipii! Tsuts kikya.

Don't cry bird! Says grandma

Kaynucs, ka alhpsnu ca lhnus wa smlhk!

Tomorrow, you'll eat two fish!

Ka putl's ti snx tc, ixq'm tsitstsiipii ulh ti paq'i7yala tc. axw ka smlhk!

When the sun comes, bird walks to the box. No fish!

Sclikt tuts' tsitstsiipii. "Kikya!!!! Anaykts ka smlhk!"

Bird is again angry. Gran! I want fish!

Axtxw kwanatnu tsitstsiipii! Tsuts tuts' kikya.

Don't cry bird! Says gran again.

Kaynucs, ka alhpsnu ca mus wa smlhk!

Tomorrow, you'll eat four fish!

Waks ti alhps tc alh ti paqi7yala tc? tsitstsiipiya ti alhps tc? Axw.

Who is eating from the box? Is it bird eating? No.

Iputsut tsitstsiipii alh ti stn.

Bird is hiding in a tree.

Tl'ap ti snx tc uuxnk... putl' ti nan tc!

The sun goes down. Here comes bear!

Paaxunua alh ti nan? Aw? Axw?

Are you afraid of a grizzly? Yes? No?

Alhps ti nan tc alh ti paqi7yala tc!

Grizzly is eating from the box!

Axw yayaatwi tsitstsiipii. Sclikt Tsitstsiipii! Sclikt Stsqaaqa!

Bird isn't happy. Bird is angry! Stsqaaqa is angry!

Axw yayaaknu, nan! Tsayutsx!

You're not doing good bear! Stop it!

Axw yayaatwi nan! Anayk nan alh ti smlhk tc alh ti paqi7yala tc. Sclikt nan.

Nan isn't happy! Nan wants the fish in the box. Nan is angry.

"sclikts! Axw yayaaknu! Axwtxw alhpsnu ala smlhkts ats!"

I'm angry! You're not doing good! Don't eat of my fish!

Way, alhps nan alh tsitstsiipii. Glurp!

Nan eats bird. Glurp!

Going through a theme every two weeks, means we are not teaching each story completely, rather we are choosing some of the most important aspects to focus on in depth, while focusing on comprehension during telling of the rest.

Focus Sentences

-tic t'ayc ti ____ - *this is a ____.*

Xlhalhh ____ - ____ *is hungry.*

Iputsut alh ti ____ - *hides in a ____.*

Paaxunua alh ti ____? - *are you scared of a ____?*

Week Two

1. Learn About

Smlhk t'ayc. Alhi ti smlhk tc ala qla. lixq'lm ti smlhk tc. Axw ixq'm ti smlh tc.

This is a fish. The fish lives in the water. The fish swims. The fish doesn't walk.

Atsaya t'ayc. Mukwliits ti atsaya tc. axw wats' ti atsaya tc. Sk'c ti maxsas ti atsaya tc!

This is a fox. The fox is red-skinned. The fox isn't a dog. The nose of the fox is black!

Candle t'ayc. Niixw t'ayc. Kwl ti niixw tc. Nana ti niixw tc! Kmayakts! Anaykts ka qla.

This is a candle. This is fire. This is hot. The fire is ouch! My hand is sore. I want water.

Yaki t'ayc. Ts'xwliits ti yaki tc. Axw mukwliits ti yaki tc. Alhi ti yaki tc alh ti smt. Axw alhis ala qla.

This is a mountain goat. The mountain goat has white fur. The mountain goat isn't red-furred. The goat lives on a mountain. It isn't in the water.

2. Nouns

Nan – grizzly
Atsaya – fox
Yaki – mountain goat
Lamatu – sheep
Micmiklh – star

3. Family

Stan – mother
Man – father
Waks ts'ayc? Who is this?
Waks t'ayc? Who is this?

4. location

ulh ti paqi7yala tc *in the box*
ulh ti numutsta tc *to the door*
ula umatstus *to where it goes*
ulh ti tipl tc *to the table*
alhi – *to be (location)*
alh ti smt tc *on the mountain*

5. Description words

Colour words

mukw – red

Numbers

Mus, ts'icw

Endings

-liits – skinned
-uulh – rocks/balls

Other

kwl – hot

6. Emotion words

kma ti slq' – sad

7. body parts

-ak – hands/arms
-alh – feet/legs
Quts'-ak-m, mus-ak-m.
wash/touch your hands
etc

8. TPR or verbs

Putl'x! – come

TI'ikmx! – run

TI'apx ulh ti ____ tc. – *go to the* ____

Kw'nax ulh ti ____ tc. – *point at the* ____

Usqa alh ti ____ tc. – *exit from the* ____

Verbs

Alhpsx c ti ____! *Eat some* ____!

Tsutx ____! – *say* ____!

lixqlm – swim

9. outside play words

Tayamktx ulh nts! *Throw it to me!*

Utl'uk' – upwards

Uuxnk – downwards

10. time words

Tscwlcts'n ska ____ *it's time to* ____

Kaynucs – tomorrow

11. Eating

Anayknua alh ti _? *Do you want a _?*

Smqlanua? *Are you thirsty?*

12. Entry and Exit

Nucstimutx! – *be quiet!*

Ists'siistimutx! – *be loud!*

Askuutamx! – *put on your coat*

Kstx ti kuutnu! – *take off your coat*

Anulht'iiqwtx! – *hang it up*

13. Classroom words

- Yayaaknu! – *well done!*
- Yayuutsnu! – *well said!*
- Ayuts7isu! – *say it again!*

14. transitive

Alhk'cits ka ____ - *I see some* ____

Quts'its ti ____ *I wash the* ____

STORY *Stsqaaqa n Nan – part 2*

Sqw' tsitstsiipii uuxnk, uuxnk, ula uts'aaxs nan. Usqa tsitstsiipii!

Bird flies down, to bear's bum. He exits!

"sclikts! Axw yayaaknu! Axwtwx alhpsnu ala smlhkts ats!"

I'm angry! You're not doing good! Don't eat of my fish!

"Wanuks?? Alhpsts luts' alh ti tsitstsiipii.... Way!"

Who are you? I already ate some bird.... Okay!

Alhps tuts' nan alh tc. Usqa tuts' tsitstsiipii alh ti uts'aaxs nan!

Nan ate the bird again. Bird exited bear's bum again!

Alhps tuts' nan alh tc. Usqa tuts' tsitstsiipii alh ti uts'aaxs nan.

Nan ate the bird again. Bird exited bear's bum again!

Alhps tuts' nan alh tsitstsiipii. Nutsuptsaaxm nan ca stntni.

Nan ate bird again. Nan plugged his bum with sticks.

Sqw' tsitstsiipii uuxnk. Axw usqas! Axw ti ka numutsta!

Bird flew downwards. He doesn't go out! There's no door!

K'cis tsitstsiipii wa stntni ts. Tamniixw Tsitstsiipii!

Bird sees the sticks. Bird makes a fire.

Tl'ikm nan utl'uk'. Anananananaaa!

Nan runs upwards. Anana!!!!

Alhi ti niixw alh ti uts'aaxs. Anananananaaa!

There's a fire in his bum. Anana!!!

Tl'ikm utl'uk' alh ti smt. Sqw' ula micmiklh ts.

He runs upwards on the mountain. He jumps into the stars.

Usqa tsitstsiipii alh ti uts'aaxs. Micmiklh ts'n Nan.

Bird exits his bum. Nan is now stars.

Focus Sentences

usqa alh ti ____ - exit a ____

axw ti ka ____ - there is no ____

alhi ____ alh ____ - there is ____ at ____

Add-ons

Include "tsut" whenever thing sare said. "tsuts nan" – bear says.

Appendix 3: Telling the Mushrooms Apart – Verb Endings for Specific Situations

Teaching verb endings is something like teaching someone to identify fifty different kinds of mushrooms. You could just dump examples of them all on the table and ask someone to memorize them, you could dump them one at a time on the table, but still, the best method is going to be to take a person into the forest, and teach them the mushrooms that grow in each specific environment, one environment at a time.

The same is true of transitive verb endings. No one situation requires knowing every verb ending, in fact no one situation requires even half of them. Playing a game of tag? We need “I caught you” and “you caught me”. Saying a prayer? We need “we thank you” and “you take care of us” and a few more. By focusing on what verb endings are used in specific situations, we can teach all of the endings on situation at a time, making everything (hopefully) more meaningful, and more relevant. The following seven pages of charts give fourteen rough categories of situations that cover almost all of the transitive verb endings in Nuxalk.

The charts are not very precise, they don’t include things like various types of commands, they lump together conversations that are sometimes fairly different, and they separate some that you might consider to be the same, but in general, I think this will be a useful tool for teachers of not just Nuxalk, but possibly any language with complex transitive verb morphology.

I have also completely ignored situations that only focus on intransitive verbs, so be aware that there are many, many more types of activities (including many we have already developed and used) that are not referenced here.

Using this Tool

There are a few ways to use this tool. The first is as an aid in sequencing situations. In general, find situations where the students already know all of the grammatical endings, and then expend the number and variety of activities. When you are confident in the students’ knowledge, look for a new group of activities that only require the addition of one or two new suffix combinations.

The second way is by teaching an ending, then looking in this document for what situations you can use to present it. If you are trying to compile relevant example sentences, this chart may give you some good ideas.

I have taken the step of using multiple colours, representing the most prominent endings with blue. I have highlighted in a reddish-orange other endings that are likely to also be needed in a situation or which can be easily taught in a slightly modified context. I have highlighted in a yellowish-orange endings which might appear, but are less likely still. Notice that some contexts are far more controlled than others; in particular, *smayusta* are very limited in their grammar, and only rarely introduce anything other than third person pronouns (except when discussing where the speaker heard or learnt the story).

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcv		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinit
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Playing tag (various forms), greetings, goodbye

Getting into a fight with someone (challenge, hate, love, know, like)

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcv		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinit
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Lego building activity (causatives), I spy, Rock Climbing Activity, the first half of Andy-Andy Over, rock throwing game (sk'ts'a)

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcv		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinit
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Prayer, private and for group.

Calling to request something on the phone

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcv		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinit
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Speeches, as individual and on behalf of group.

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhew		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinits
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Teasing someone about a boy/girl or group of people who are possibly present – bachelor's point activity

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhew		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinits
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Are you being followed? Were you seen? Passives.

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhew		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinits
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

What are you called? What is your X called?

Where/when were you born? I was born . . .

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhew		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinits
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Listening to or reading or telling a smayusta or other story about other people.

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcv		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinits
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Listening, reading, or telling a personal story or event.

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcv		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinits
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Encouraging a sports team, discussing a recent context, a fishing trip, hunting trip, explaining a game's rules...

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhew		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinit
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Describing pictures of interactions between animals or people.

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhew		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinit
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Going to the hospital, fear of what might be done and reassuring (similar with cops, animals, bears)

Discussing opinions others have of you and another

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcv		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinitis
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Describing and comparing opinions of something, someone, or some ones (like, hate, consider to be X, need, etc)

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

	Me	You	Him/her	us	You all	them
I		-tsinu	-its		Tulhap	-tits
You	-tscw		-icw	Tulhcv		-ticw
He/She	-tss	-tst c t'ayc	-is	Tulhs	Tap c t'ayc	-tis
We		Tulhnu	-ilh		Tulhap	-tilh
You all	-tsap		-ip	Tulhp		-tip
they	-tsant	-tst c ats	-it	tulht	Tap c ts	-tit

**Primary
Focus
Endings**

**2ndary
Focus
Endings**

**Other
Possible
Endings**

Intransitive and possessive endings	
I	-ts
You	-nu
He/she	-s
We	(i)lh
You all	-(n)ap
They	-(n)aw

Passive endings	
I	-tinitis
You	-tst
He/she	-im
We	-tinilh
You all	-tap
They	-tim

Situations/Contexts

Discussing a person's / people's response to a concert, dance, performance – they listened to them, heard them, watched, liked, disliked them, etc.

Notes: commands and causatives not separately marked, instead are included in this chart

Appendix 4: High School Curriculum

The following appendix is a curricular document demonstrating possible big ideas and curricular competencies for grades 10, 11, and 12. This document demonstrates the desired growth of language learners' story related skills, ideally acquired through their target language. This document largely represents my own work and thought processes, though it was done in consultation with other teachers and administration.

BIG IDEAS

Nuxalk Language is connected to the Nuxalkmc people's lands, cultures, ceremonies and seasonal ways of life

Appropriate words, phrases and patterns in Nuxalk help us communicate with our Elders, family, friends, teachers and those who look up to us in all aspects of our lives

Interacting with literature in our language help us hear and join the voice of our community

Listening, viewing and participating with respect and intent help us make our language and our way of life our own

Stories are central to our culture. Knowing, telling, creating and sharing our Smayusta, smsma, and alats'i give us our land, laws and families. They give us knowledge and wisdom to itNuxalk.

Learning Standards

Curricular Competencies	Content
<i>Students are expected to do the following:</i> - students will gain an understanding of how our treasures are explained and shared through our smayusta and our practices around our smayusta, and will know their own smayusta. - to be able, with preparation, to share stories they have heard, they have witnessed, or have experienced personally. - to relate stories both orally and/or written, both Nuxalk and other, to events in their lives and in the life of the community, using them to understand and give meaning to emotions, traumas, reactions, and decision making. - as individuals or as groups, to search out the stories or experiences of others in their community relating to chosen themes, events, times, places, or families. -students will understand how Nuxalk experiences and storytelling practices are reflected in the Nuxalk language	<i>Students are expected to know the following:</i> - the four treasures - how their smayusta connects to specific places and events - how they and their family are connected to smayusta - the components of various stories - the uses and purposes of various stories and storytelling practices - vocabulary and structures in the language that are important to the telling of different stories and to specific experiences - timeline of the modern history of our nation - stories related to at least three elders <i>It is understood that as we talk of healing, ceremony, history, seasonal practices and lifeways, we are structuring these discussions around stories that ground them.</i>

- students choose a volunteer project to engage in, one that connects them to their broader community, and are expected to tell orally about their experiences, including expectations, highs, lows, and impact.

- individual and group projects related to coming to an understanding and sharing that understanding of how recent history has impacted their community and families, connecting them as individuals and as a group to the achievements and challenges of previous generations.

- become familiar with the resources available relating to Nuxalk language, practice, knowledge, skills, ceremony, history, and territory.

This curriculum is a holistic curriculum, learned over many years. In grades 10, 11 and 12, students will work on this holistic curriculum, but have different expectations surrounding demonstration of these competencies.

In Grade 10 Students will begin the foundations of learning to lead younger classes, with direct support.

With direct support, students will begin to focus on:

- students will expand their understanding of our treasures, as they are explained and shared through smayusta and our practices around smayusta, and will be able to share their own smayusta.

-gaining an understanding of how our treasures are explained and shared through our smayusta and our practices around our smayusta, and will know their own smayusta.

- completing individual and group projects related to coming to an understanding and sharing that understanding of how our community has developed through time, understanding the impact of the history shared in our smayustas on who we are in the present.

- choosing a volunteer project to engage in, one that connects them to their broader community, and are expected to tell (orally and written) about their experiences, including expectations, highs, lows, and impact.

Students are expected to know the following:

- timeline of the full history of our nation*
- stories related to at least two locations in the territory*

BIG IDEAS

Nuxalk Language is connected to the Nuxalkmc people's lands, cultures, ceremonies and seasonal ways of life	Appropriate words, phrases and patterns in Nuxalk help us communicate with our Elders, family, friends, teachers and those who look up to us in all aspects of our lives	Interacting with literature in our language help us hear and join the voice of our community	Listening, viewing and participating with respect and intent help us make our language and our way of life our own	Stories are central to our culture. Knowing, telling, creating and sharing our Smayusta, smsma, and alats'i give us our land, laws and families. They give us knowledge and wisdom to itNuxalk.

Learning Standards

Curricular Competencies	Content
<i>Students are expected to do the following:</i> - students will gain an understanding of how our treasures are explained and shared through our smayusta and our practices around our smayusta, and will know their own smayusta. - to be able, with preparation, to share stories they have heard, they have witnessed, or have experienced personally. - to relate stories both orally and/or written, both Nuxalk and other, to events in their lives and in the life of the community, using them to understand and give meaning to emotions, traumas, reactions, and decision making. - as individuals or as groups, to search out the stories or experiences of others in their community relating to chosen themes, events, times, places, or families.	<i>Students are expected to know the following:</i> - the four treasures - how their smayusta connects to specific places and events - how they and their family are connected to smayusta - the components of various stories - the uses and purposes of various stories and storytelling practices - vocabulary and structures in the language that are important to the telling of different stories and to specific experiences - timeline of the modern history of our nation - stories related to at least three elders

<i>-students will understand how Nuxalk experiences and storytelling practices are reflected in the Nuxalk language</i> <i>- students choose a volunteer project to engage in, one that connects them to their broader community, and are expected to tell orally about their experiences, including expectations, highs, lows, and impact.</i> <i>- individual and group projects related to coming to an understanding and sharing that understanding of how recent history has impacted their community and families, connecting them as individuals and as a group to the achievements and challenges of previous generations.</i> <i>- become familiar with the resources available relating to Nuxalk language, practice, knowledge, skills, ceremony, history, and territory.</i> This curriculum is a holistic curriculum, learned over many years. In grades 10, 11 and 12, students will work on this holistic curriculum, but have different expectations surrounding demonstration of these competencies. In Grade 11 Students will: <i>- expand their understanding of our treasures, as they are explained and shared through smayusta and our practices around smayusta, and will be able to share their own smayusta.</i> <i>- gain an understanding of how our treasures are explained and shared through our smayusta and our practices around our smayusta, and will know their own smayusta.</i> <i>- complete individual and group projects related to coming to an understanding and sharing that understanding of how our community has developed through time, understanding the impact of the history shared in our smayustas on who we are in the present.</i> <i>- choose a volunteer project to engage in, one that connects them to their broader community, and are expected to tell (orally and written) about their experiences, including expectations, highs, lows, and impact.</i>	<i>It is understood that as we talk of healing, ceremony, history, seasonal practices and lifeways, we are structuring these discussions around stories that ground them.</i> Students are expected to know the following: <i>- timeline of the full history of our nation</i> <i>- stories related to at least two locations in the territory</i>

BIG IDEAS

Nuxalk Language is connected to the Nuxalkmc people's lands, cultures, ceremonies and seasonal ways of life	Appropriate words, phrases and patterns in Nuxalk help us communicate with our Elders, family, friends, teachers and those who look up to us in all aspects of our lives	Interacting with literature in our language help us hear and join the voice of our community	Listening, viewing and participating with respect and intent help us make our language and our way of life our own	Stories are central to our culture. Knowing, telling, creating and sharing our Smayusta, smsma, and alats'i give us our land, laws and families. They give us knowledge and wisdom to itNuxalk.

Learning Standards

Curricular Competencies	Content
<i>Students are expected to do the following:</i> - students will gain an understanding of how our treasures are explained and shared through our smayusta and our practices around our smayusta, and will know their own smayusta. - to be able, with preparation, to share stories they have heard, they have witnessed, or have experienced personally. - to relate stories both orally and/or written, both Nuxalk and other, to events in their lives and in the life of the community, using them to understand and give meaning to emotions, traumas, reactions, and decision making. - as individuals or as groups, to search out the stories or experiences of others in their community relating to chosen themes, events, times, places, or families. -students will understand how Nuxalk experiences and storytelling practices are reflected in the Nuxalk language	<i>Students are expected to know the following:</i> - the four treasures - how their smayusta connects to specific places and events - how they and their family are connected to smayusta - the components of various stories - the uses and purposes of various stories and storytelling practices - vocabulary and structures in the language that are important to the telling of different stories and to specific experiences - timeline of the modern history of our nation - stories related to at least three elders <i>It is understood that as we talk of healing, ceremony, history, seasonal practices and lifeways, we are structuring these discussions around stories that ground them.</i>

- <i>students choose a volunteer project to engage in, one that connects them to their broader community, and are expected to tell orally about their experiences, including expectations, highs, lows, and impact.</i> - <i>individual and group projects related to coming to an understanding and sharing that understanding of how recent history has impacted their community and families, connecting them as individuals and as a group to the achievements and challenges of previous generations.</i> - <i>become familiar with the resources available relating to Nuxalk language, practice, knowledge, skills, ceremony, history, and territory.</i> This curriculum is a holistic curriculum, learned over many years. In grades 10, 11 and 12, students will work on this holistic curriculum, but have different expectations surrounding demonstration of these competencies. In Grade 12 Students will: - <i>draw on our experiences with telling our smayusta, and using our various storytelling approaches to make sense of our experiences, our history, and to build community and practice, students will tell or write stories relating to who they are as individuals. Wanuks?</i> - <i>choose a volunteer project to engage in, one that connects them to their broader community, and are expected to tell (orally, written and with visual aids) about their experiences, including expectations, highs, lows, and impact.</i> -<i>be confident to lead classes in Nuxalk Language for younger students by the end of Grade 12</i>	<i>Students are expected to know the following:</i> - <i>timeline of the full history of our nation</i> - <i>stories related to at least two locations in the territory</i>

Appendix 5: Snut'li Creek Unit Outline (Grade 7-12)

This is a unit outline built around a one-day late September field-trip spent mushrooming or bouldering.

Preteach/Foundational Skills

- Students will have already practiced taking notes on stories they hear in order to retell them
- Students will have already established field-trip routines and expectations

Build-up Activities

- **Class 1:** Do a lesson on mushroom picking
 - o Share a story about Esther (a former cultural teacher) and Vera meeting bears while picking mushrooms, and have the kids take down notes they consider necessary in order to retell the story. Use a selection of images to make the meaning of several phrases clear so they can be said in the language. Include some vocabulary related to mushrooms, emotions, and terrain (path, sidehill, bench/ridge).
 - o Break in to small groups and share experiences within those groups related to either picking with family or encounters with bears, while also pointing to the same images and using those phrases, with assistance from peers or teacher.
- **Class 2: Gym climbing wall.** safety expectations and basic gear use.
- **Class 3: tell smayusta and stories of Anulhk'als** (Snootli Peak) and rock climbing connected to harvesting mountain goats or seabird eggs.
 - o Nuxalk people used to regularly climb on rocky cliffs in order to harvest seagull eggs.
 - o Anulhk'als is the mountain in a smayusta of the Moody family. Have a family member share the story with the class. The story involves Twalalhit, the mountain goat hunter.
 - o Hunting mountain goats has been an important activity involving climbing these mountains year round. Share climbing techniques used, routes used on this mountain, the methods used to capture goats (snare, dogs, spears).

Field Trip option 1 (September through late October)

- Go mushroom picking up the left side of the Snut'li valley, starting at the scenic side of the creek with the deep pools. Discuss the concept of *nuskasyutsta* and the recognition of beautiful places or places of power.
- Following this continue into the deep moss searching for mushrooms, passing some boulders where the old road funnels into the trail that goes up the valley and through to South Bentinck arm, stopping next to the large boulder overlooking the trail, the canyon and the valley.
- Share the story of Cwlaaxum – the Glutton (*The Bella Coola Indians: Volume 1*, 300). A story of a young man whose good family worked to secure all the good things he needed for life, but his own choices would undo their work and make him a person to be ashamed of. After having a child, he changes his heart and decides to leave and circle the entire watershed. Upon reaching the stream we have just climbed, he ascended it, met a *Syut* (spirit) by the deep pools who changed his awful appearance and counselled him on his future behaviour. He climbed out of the creek to the trail and met his community, sitting on top of a large boulder beside the trail, likely right where we are at this point, and rejoined his wife and child. If I am also there, I can share that this place is meaningful to me as well as it is where I asked for permission to adopt my son. Language shared will be either tangible objects seen and engaged with on the trip, or emotional/family related terms from the story.

- Take some time at that location to allow students to share a snack and reflect in their journals.

Field Trip option 2 (May through October – good weather dependent)

- Go bouldering up the right side of the Snut'li valley, along the base of *Anulhk'als* mountain. Stop by the deep pools from the opposite side of the stream. Discuss the concept of *nuskasyutsta* and the recognition of beautiful places, as well as share the story of Cwlaaxusm, the Glutton, as outlined above.
- Talk about some of the mountains and share that the boulders we are climbing have been named after different mountains up the valley. As a group, climb a new route on one boulder, preparing to name it and putting it in the Bella Coola climbing guide. Have a discussion about thoughts related to naming the land and how it might be connected to our governance. Language shared will be connected to the Nuxalk names of features, rocks concepts connected to what we have seen during the day such as the impacts of forest fire, the impacts of glaciation and changing sea-levels as described in stories students are already familiar with, depending on student interest.
- Ask participants if they or their families have any personal anecdotes to share connected to experiences at that location. Ask staff to begin sharing if need be.
- Take some time there to allow students to share a snack and reflect on the day in journals.

Post field-trip lessons or activities

- As a class, retell our experiences, then break in to small groups and illustrate in any one of a variety of available ways one meaningful part of our day.
- With permission, share a portion of the Schooner Smayusta, telling the story of Pnxkila, reflecting on his journey through that valley and his similar challenges with his appearance.
- Share the story of Clayton Mack and his brother crossing from South Bentinck through the valley in winter and his brother's decision that these trips weren't for him. Ask students brainstorm reasons why they would agree with Clayton or with his brother.
- With permission, share more of the Moody Smayusta, the descent of first ancestors down this same trail, and the experiences of the 2nd generation descendent with the death of his family, pursuing a *syut* into the valley, and returning to restore his family. Relate this story to the experiences of our field trip and the other stories we have engaged with during the year.
- Do a project related to the entire unit. Some ideas might be:
 - o A collage that shows what they can share about the location and their thoughts.
 - o As a group prepare to take a friend to the area and tell them about the area
- Spend a class retelling the experience of the day in Nuxalk, including shared stories.
- As a group, validate our chosen name for a climbing route at a Moody family potlatch.

Unit Assessment

- Expectations for journaling, other assessment and reflection tasks, will be co-created with the specific classroom teachers in order to support additional curriculum requirements such as English language learning, Art, Science, Physical Education, etc., and to draw on routine and expectations that have already been established.

Appendix 6: Sample Summer-Camp Schedule

Trip One – buildup 1

Saturday

- Boat ride to location
- Set up in cabins
- Prayer and opening activity
- Hike to vantage point
 - expectations for weekend
 - icebreaker games
 - story of area and connections to campers
 - return hike, check-ins
- supper
- chores
- free time leading to singing, dancing, sharing experiences of the day
- lights out

Sunday

- wake-up, 4-directional run + cold water dips
- breakfast + cleanup
- Small group activities
 - hikes or swimming or exploring
 - snack lunches
 - more group time (often free play in different places)
- rediscovery games
- down time / crafts
- Supper + cleanup + chores
- free time leading to singing, dancing, sharing experiences of the day, recognizing accomplishments
- lights out

Monday

- 4 directional run
- breakfast + chores
- games
- cleanup, loading the boat, return
- discussion of plans/prep for next trip

Trip Two – buildup 2

Friday

- Evening boat ride to location (Tallio Hotsprings / lcp'iixm)
- set up, review expectations.
- Supper + chores
- hotsprings/swimming
- singing/dancing
- story of hotsprings and healing
- lights out

Saturday

- 4 directional run + dips
- circle time, day plan review
- Boat across to camp 2 bay (Tsawlhmmim)
 - story of the q'xtis and safety
 - hike to big tree + snacklunches
 - return hike, check-ins, exploring
 - return to Hotsprings
- free time (hotsprings/crafts)
- Supper + chores
- free time leading to singing, dancing, sharing experiences of the day
- story of the famine
- lights out

Sunday

- wake-up, 4-directional activity + dips
- breakfast + cleanup
- Small Group activities with snacklunches or group boat trip up and down South Bentinck
 - stories of elders lives there, traplines, family connections, place names
- rediscovery games
- down time / crafts
- Supper + cleanup + chores
- free time leading to singing, dancing, sharing experiences of the day, recognizing accomplishments, reflecting on favourite stories of the area
- lights out

Monday

- wake-up, 4-directional activity + dips
- breakfast + chores
- games
- cleanup, loading the boat, return to Bella Coola
 - Story of Qnklst
 - discussion of plans/prep for next trip

Trip Three – the big one

Day 1

- loading boat
- good byes
- travel+snack lunches + games that focus on the journey
- arrival routine
 - unloading, set-up of tents
 - set-up of groups
- supper + chores
- discussion of hopes/expectations/plans
- stories
- lights out

Days 2-6

- Morning Routine
 - 4-directional run
 - circle
 - breakfast
 - prepare for outing
- small-group activities
 - hike or boat to location
 - activities/games/free time
 - sack-lunches
 - making connections between stories and days activities
 - share stories from previous rediscovery camps
 - use some Nuxalk language for check-ins
- Supper and chores
- Evening activities
 - free time / free crafts
 - active games
 - singing/dancing
 - review of yesterdays story and a new one
- Lights out

Day 7

- morning routine
- group solo
 - each group takes one potato each, and goes to stay at a separate location for 24 hours
 - people build shelters, fires with minimal help, work together to make their group comfortable and have a good time.

Day 8

- return from group solo
 - unpack
- lunch
- full group trip cliff-jumping and pebble beach
- Supper
- Individuals leave for solos
- Evening activities
 - possibly include one-hour solos

Day 9

- morning routine
- small group activities
- supper + chores
- solo campers return
- evening routines

Day 10

- morning routine
- pack up, load up for boat ride home
 - snack lunches on trip
 - games, sharing, planning for next trip, alone time and journalling

Story list

- Days 1-2 various smayusta of the area, stories which map to the shape of the land, the village sites, the large geographical features and the family connections. On day 2 we retell but check to see which groups saw which features and landmarks
- Day 3 Story of the shelling of Kimsquit, and how the community moved to Bella Coola and built connections through marriage
- Day 4 Stories of trapping, living, hunting on the land as shared by elders, plus more stories about earlier rediscovery camps
- Day 5 The story of how rediscovery was established, the hopes of the camp, and stories from the lives of those elders who helped the camp happen.
- Day 6 Stories of survival
- Day 7 No stories except in individual groups – sharing stories from previous group solos
- Day 8 Stories of pebble beach area
- Day 9 Solo campers share their experiences. We share stories of other 24h solos
- Day 10 we tell and retell stories of what happened during the week on the long trip home

Group Activity Options

each day, the smaller groups go off and spend most of the day doing a hike plus activities at different locations. Groups tend to cycle through locations based on preference

- Old village site – short hike to the remains of an old village site, several hundred years abandoned but house depressions still visible. We talk about how people lived, how things have changed.
- Waterfall – a long hike to a waterfall, semi-alpine flowers, fresh water, seen as a challenge and we often play at the top, or swim below where it goes into the ocean. It also presents a broad view which lets us talk about the broader area and history, including the old fish canneries
- cedar hole/Axstikayc – a long hike to the foot of a canyon where we play on a large sandy shoreline and swim in a backwater, with optional hikes to petroglyphs or up to a rocky ledge connected to the smayusta of the area.
- River beach – a short walk up the river to a nice place for games, fishing, building shelters, or swimming
- The bay – often a canoeing destination, around the point, it is a place for swimming and also a day to practice working as a team paddling
- A different, younger old village site plus berry picking – the location of the village before it moved to Bella Coola, still showing evidence of old buildings, craters from the shelling of the village by a British ship, and lots of history. We can talk about the food forest that still exists around it and pick berries or other available food.

Trip Four – camper led camp (description and commentary)

We return to either the Hotsprings or Green Bay, and while the routines remain similar, planning and scheduling is done by the campers during a supper event if not completed the last few days of the previous camp. While there, we also plan trip 5. Evening stories are both connected to place, but mostly focused on building connections and understanding. Ideally, most stories are shared by youth, with help from an elder or staff member if necessary.

Trip Five – family camp (description and commentary)

Youth planned camp, going to whichever location we did not go to on trip 4, with families included. Graduation ceremony and uplifting of participants follows, depending on how many of the children and families are able to attend (if many can't come, have graduation as a separate event later on). Campers lead evening activities and stories.