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A TREATISE ON THE ASSAULT ON LANGUAGE SOVEREIGNTY

IN THE UNITED STATES:

HISTORY, EDUCATION, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

By

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DISSERTATION

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in Anthropology, Cultural Heritage Studies

The University of Montana  
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A Treatise on the Assault on Language Sovereignty in the United States:  
History, Education, and Implications for Policy

Committee Chair: S. Neyooxet Greymorning

This dissertation examines the revitalization of endangered Indigenous languages in the United States in relation to the concept of sovereignty. I investigate historical reasons for language destruction in the United States as a means of understanding the mechanism used in conquest and the long-range effects on the educational system. I use the term “language sovereignty” to reflect the right of tribal organizations in the US to assert the use of traditional languages as a means of self-identifying as distinct sovereign nations. I draw from initiatives in Hawaii and Europe to demonstrate how regional and linguistic minority languages have been revitalized and reintroduced in culture and commerce. Lastly, I suggest how language sovereignty may influence general language diversity and future language policy in the United States.

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## Table of Contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
Chapter One – Introduction to the Study	7
Chapter Two – Historical Origins of Language Loss	30
I. English and Native Languages in Colonial America	31
II. Interpreters and Miscommunications in the Westward Journey of Lewis and Clark	51
III. Mullan, Sohon, and Regard for Native Languages	66
IV. “Not an Educational Institution”: Native American Boarding Schools in the 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> Centuries	76
Chapter Three – Minority Language Recovery: Four Cases	107
I. ‘O Ka ‘Ōlelo Ke Ka’ā ‘o ka Maui: Language is the Fiber	110
II. Welsh, Survivor on the Celtic Fringe	116
III. The “Second Mother Tongue” and the Tatar Revival	121
IV. Evenki: A Language Linked to Local Economy	128
Chapter Four – The Path to Language Sovereignty	132
I. Sovereignty: An Overview	133
II. The Sovereignty Paradox	144
III. Language Sovereignty	150
IV. The Potential Range of Language Sovereignty	152
Chapter Five – Summary, Findings, and Recommendations for Further Study	159
Bibliography	191

Every time a white person stands up to talk about Indians,

I get knots in my stomach.

-- Verna Kirkness, Fisher River Cree  
Director of First Nations House of Learning  
University of British Columbia

\* \* \* \*

The Kiowa language is hard to understand, but, you know, the storm spirit understands it . . . Lightning comes from its mouth, and the tail, whipping and thrashing on the air, makes the high, hot wind of the tornado. But they speak to it, saying "Pass over me." They are not afraid of Man-ka-ih, for it understands their language.

-- N. Scott Momaday  
*The Way to Rainy Mountain*

\* \* \* \*

Where did tribes get their sovereignty?

How did tribes keep their sovereignty?

How long have tribes had their sovereignty?

The answers:

From the Creator who put them here.

They inherited it.

Since the beginning of time.

-- Coeur d'Alene Tribe

## Chapter One

### Introduction to the Study

Scholars and language workers in various capacities spend thousands of hours each year engaged in capturing the remains of endangered languages, documenting their vocabularies and structures, and planning for the futures of those languages. Those who teach traditional languages spend thousands of hours each year facilitating the process where language is conveyed to a receptive learner and lodged in the learner's memory. Beyond universities and tribal cultural centers where teaching and learning take place, mainstream publications and academic journals sympathize with the plight of tribes and communities whose languages have been lost due to forces as blatant as conquest and as subtle as scorn. Even legislation, albeit temporary, stop-gap, and underfunded, has attempted to acknowledge and protect declining languages. Meanwhile, time passes: elders take their last breaths, communities struggle under the weight of pressing social problems, and the wider population tends to believe that language loss is inevitable, a sad casualty of what is often called progress.

Looked at through a different lens, however, the fact that Salish, Arapaho, Blackfoot, Cherokee, Coeur d'Alene, and numerous other languages indigenous to North America continue to exist is a testament to their resilience. These languages did not decline because they lacked efficacy or relevance in a modernizing world, but because of a sustained, unrelenting assault on them that has spanned centuries. Even today, political groups insist that "English Only" is the proper medium for education and business, a stance often interwoven with patriotism. A push to make English the official language of the United



States in order to unify and simplify commerce and social life seems correlated to periods when immigration levels climb, as they have since 2007 when measured as absolute numbers (Penn 2007). For Native American languages, which prevailed in North America for thousands of years before the arrival of immigrant speakers of English, this effort foretells yet another blow, an encumbrance weighing down the persistent efforts of tribes, academics, and well-intentioned policy makers to allow languages to survive, each for different reasons: cultural, educational, economic, and therapeutic.

The millennia during which Indigenous languages were spoken where English is now dominant in the US attest to an intangible sovereignty, the prerogative to use the language of one's heritage and culture. With conquest, this sovereignty was challenged and dismissed, a pattern repeated across the globe to establish dominance and dependence on the new order. Yet the inherent right to use traditional language in private life, business dealings, education, health care, and in the ways in which the speakers are represented publically never completely disappeared, and it is this enduring sense of language sovereignty that is the focus of this dissertation.

Restoring the use of a language after years of calculated assault cannot be accomplished without cohesive planning; even with restrictions removed, the language cannot suddenly spring back to life or tentative speakers step into positions of authority and influence. Yet language planning meets with resistance both within and beyond tribal organizations; the use of limited funds to revive "culture" may be seen as a futile effort when more pressing practical matters demand attention. However, without language planning, those concerned with revitalization of Native languages are left with no unified goal, no clear objectives, no way to measure success and progress toward the goal, no way to tell allies from detractors. Futurists advocate planning for change – a complex task involving multiple disciplines, perspectives, an awareness of stakeholders, and no small amount of

persuasion. Futuring, defined by Edward Cornish as the art and science of exploring the future, requires imagination, a clear assessment of the current state of affairs, and continuous challenging of fatalism (Cornish 2004). With the loudly-ticking clock of language death, language planning in the United States is at a critical juncture, one less related to cultural nostalgia than as a means to solving glaring inequities in language communities. Fluctuations in funding and disagreements about how programs should be run arise routinely. Language planning affects not only cultural continuity, but education, the economies of Native communities and their neighbors, and even their access to health care. Furthermore, language planning that has no clout is unlikely to be implemented or maintained. Tribal cultural committees and other teaching organizations struggle to obtain the authority and influence to command funding, organization, and autonomy. Clearly, this places language planning, preservation, and teaching efforts in potential conflict with the pressures of an English-dominant United States. From this vantage point, it is easy to see the developing need for the acknowledgement of language sovereignty, with workable policies both localized and at a national level, to provide consistency and authority to revitalization efforts. Yet a policy that *allows* the use of traditional languages might also *impose* regulations in one-size-fits-all fashion, and one thing that quickly becomes evident in a study of language-revitalization efforts is that there are many styles and sizes, as unique as the organizations and tribes implementing them. Further complicating the issue is the point that tribes themselves are faced with the question of whether or not to direct precious resources into language programs that solidify their status as sovereign nations and the implications of that status for the future. It raises as well the question of whether a broad language preservation policy in the United States would undermine language sovereignty maintained by tribal organizations or strengthen it.

### Organization of the Study

Chapter One places the study in the context of endangered language revitalization issues and identifies the main research question, provides key definitions and background, and justifies the need for the study. After consideration of the numerous cultural, economic, and spiritual elements involved in the use of traditional language by tribal groups, I set forth the following definition of language sovereignty: the inherent right of tribal people to use their traditional language in private life, business dealings, education, health matters, and representations of the tribe to the general public. In Chapter Two, an examination of language history in the United States reveals the mechanism by which the languages alive on the mainland continent at the time of conquest became endangered in the first place. Fueled by extreme fear and Christian fervor, English speakers spread across the American landscape with a conviction that they would write the history of the colonies, and that it would be written in English to have the greatest political influence in the English homeland. Furthermore, denial of the existence of traditional communication systems suppressed Native voices, and even valiant efforts to sustain Native language under conquest were marginalized. The contradiction created in Christian folk by this display of cruelty and denigration has been called “unwitnessing” (Lopezina 2006) – an early form of blaming the victim.

The Spanish conquest in Mexico and Central America resulted in wholesale destruction of Indigenous accounts, even entire libraries of “records of the things their ancestors had done and had left in their annals more than a thousand years ago”, considered “idolatrous” by monks (Lopezina 2006:18), but the intractable English refused to concede that Natives had systems of documenting history. “Natives are not supposed to have recorded these events because they lacked art, history, culture” (2006:18); it served the English agenda to deny that the Natives had occupied the land in perpetuity. The

Spanish burned libraries; the English refused to acknowledge their existence. The modern-day bumper sticker that states categorically “Uncle Sam wants YOU . . . to speak English,” while humorous, reflects the belligerence of an earlier era in which Englishmen assigned English names to settlements to allay fears of disappearing into the wilderness. The educational system that grew up with nation-building in the US further diminished Native culture and undermined Indigenous modes of communication.

Examples of successful four regional language revitalization efforts, discussed in Chapter Three, reflect how communities in Hawaii, Wales, Tatarstan, and Siberia have benefited from the rise of regional and minority languages (RLMs); their successes are representative of effective strategies that combine available local, cultural, and political elements. The selection of these cases does not presume to comprise a comprehensive inventory of all worthy efforts; for example, stellar and successful efforts in Australia and South America and numerous other European endeavors are beyond the scope of this study. Increased economic opportunities, enhanced social cohesion, and improved public health have been documented as direct results of language revitalization. During the 1990s, multiple factors – including the influence of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – resulted in the assertion of sovereign language rights and numerous national language programs. In some cases, sovereignty was realized by default as centralized control became unmanageable. Authority over language learning was relinquished to local communities, who took the opportunity to champion languages formerly considered the speech of country bumpkins. Regional pride replaced shame as cultural knowledge was recognized and reclaimed. This process has been codified through the efforts of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, the Welsh Language Act, and the Good Friday Agreement. Over 30 other developed nations have created language policies since 2000, an acknowledgment that language diversity

generates economic benefit, thriving communities, and a restoration of traditional language, that most intangible of human rights. In contrast, the US has produced very little in the way of legislation that protects or funds endangered languages, although efforts in 2013 have presented Congress with the option to improve overall educational access for Native American youth.

Chapter Four moves to a discussion of language sovereignty, a crucial element of tribe- or community-managed revitalization programs and future policies regarding language support. The field of cultural resource management provides a roadmap whereby endangered language programs can benefit from funding resources. As language rights and language policy begin to be recognized in the United States, it is important to acknowledge that, for many Americans, patriotism is even now fundamentally connected to American English. Yet public perception can be shaped, as implementation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) has shown in the two decades since its inception. Language sovereignty, wisely managed, has the potential to be as beneficial to Native communities in the United States as NAGPRA was in the clarification of terms such as “sacred object” and “cultural patrimony” in the return of artifacts to their traditional – and many would say their rightful – homes (Tweedie 2002).

In discussing each of these areas, this dissertation examines the numerous factors involved in the complex relationships between tribes, the federal government, and public perceptions. Chapter Five summarizes how those concerned with language sovereignty may draw from similar circumstances in other communities and makes recommendations for further study related to language rights, education, public health, and policy-making.

### Need for and Objective of the Study

When this research began, linguists and anthropologists had already established that about 200 languages in the United States had either disappeared or were close to extinction and that over 5,000 languages globally were headed for imminent extinction (Crawford 1995). Academics had also discovered, and in some instances contributed to, efforts in numerous communities to revive traditional languages. International organizations such as UNESCO had inventoried the status of endangered languages and promoted programs for language revitalization and maintenance. The Council of Europe had created a treaty authorizing the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRMLs), and the United States had passed the Native American Languages Act (1990) and the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act (2006), the latter authorizing \$7 million to tribal organizations for language revitalization programs (HR 4766). Privately funded organizations, such as the Endangered Language Fund, promoted documentation and maintenance projects to slow the disappearance of minority languages and preserve them. Yet experts were still forecasting that “at least half the world’s linguistic diversity will disappear over the next 100 years; this means a loss of 3000+ languages forever [or] one language lost every 14 days”, and extreme estimates claimed that “in the 21st century up to 90% of human languages would become extinct” (Austin 2006:3). Clearly, there was then and continues to be a disconnect between the heartfelt desire to spare endangered languages from extinction and the reality of their survival. Teaching strategies, language nests, immersion programs, and other efforts were already in place, and scholars were filling journals with records of their documentation procedures, applications of theory, and controversies emerging between tribes and academic institutions as issues of ownership came into focus. Furthermore, in spite of dire predictions, language revitalization efforts in

Wales, New Zealand, and among some tribes in the United States (including Hawaii) began to show an increase in speakers (Austin 2006:7).

At the same time, the prevailing economic and political environment foreshadowed a reduction in funding – the lifeblood of revitalization programs -- from a level that was already modest by some standards. The most severe recession since the Great Depression forced round after round of cutbacks in government-funded programs, and private funding dropped drastically. Funding for the Martinez Act ended in fiscal year 2012, just as promising research and growing programs, such as those offered by the Office for Minority Health, suggested that, where the preferred language of the community could be used in medical services, health conditions improved and costs decreased. In education, research in retention of students suggested that access to cultural resources increased retention of minority college students (Department of Education 2007). Furthermore, while advocates paid lip service to language preservation, no major legislation equivalent to the National Historic Preservation Act (1966) received Congressional approval for the protection of Native American languages. To critics, this suggests that – like many issues affecting Native Americans – the general public and the government hold little regard for Native culture and its protection ideologically and for Native cultures individually. Without a unified language policy, would tribal organizations have the resources to continue to promote their traditional language, but with it, would they have the autonomy to control how language programs were conducted?

First, the imminent disappearance of Native American languages has been resisted through efforts to document endangered languages, to develop strategies for teaching and maintaining the languages, and to secure their preservation through legislation and policy. The present study seeks to provide an understanding of the historical sequences that so thoroughly damaged the transmission of Native American languages and the educational

policies designed to eradicate Native language and culture, which in contemporary awareness are often condemned but which may not be understood to have relevance to tribal people even today. Organized efforts to make English the supreme language of commercial operations, educational achievement, and the unifying linguistic currency of a developing nation were the result of “manifest destiny” and are interwoven with the American educational system even today.

Second, for anyone currently involved in or concerned with the teaching of young people, understanding the educational strategies used to convert Native children to English speakers, farmers, and members of a subordinate society are essential. They comprise a nightmarish collection of suppression and restriction that inexorably affected generations of Native children through reduced expectations and opportunities. Some would say that the wounds inflicted by nineteenth-century educational policies ran so deep that they are still present and evident, a type of cultural programming. Restoring status and prestige to traditional languages, to those making the effort to learn and speak those languages, and to the cultural knowledge embodied in the vocabulary and nuance of those languages all comprise a means of healing communities that have suffered generations of loss.

Last, the recognition of language sovereignty as a right of Indigenous communities in preserving their distinctiveness is crucial to future discussions about funding, decision-making, and developing equitable policy. The discussion of language sovereignty presented by this study is intended to raise critical questions about the level of financial and institutional support necessary to restore traditional languages and the benefits that the restoration of language sovereignty in Native communities offers. As the least tangible aspect of cultural heritage, endangered languages seem to demand redoubled protections, whether through the decisions of individual tribal organizations, educational support, national policy, or simply a policy of non-interference with emerging language communities.



The field of cultural resource management has made great strides in the last twenty years in clarifying issues of ownership, rights, and sovereignty over physical objects. For cultural resource management to find application in clarifying and solidifying language protections seems appropriate to expand benefits too great to be overlooked.

### Scope and Limitations of The Study

Specifically, this study addresses the following question: Given the historic past regarding Native language use and limitations placed on tribal sovereignty and continuing efforts to erode it, can language sovereignty be freely exercised, protected by tribal governments, and sheltered by national legislation? This study provides an overview of historical factors relevant to the diminishment of Native American languages in the United States and sweeping educational actions which worked to the detriment of millions of Native Americans, ironically in the name of assimilation and economic betterment. The position of this study is at the crossroads of historical research on language loss, the premises of cultural heritage, and control of regions and communities over their language of preference. The particulars regarding revitalization efforts of individual languages are well-documented elsewhere. The unique offerings of this study are to utilize and clarify the term “language sovereignty”, to point out gaps in current heritage legislation intended to preserve cultural resources in the US, identify problems that should be resolved in order to protect language sovereignty, and demonstrate why language sovereignty is critical to policy development.

### Review of the Literature

Language policy is inherently controversial, and different points of view offer valid and persuasive arguments. There is disagreement about whether languages should be preserved at all in some quarters, about multilingual and English-Only policies, about the

role of schools in supporting bilingual students or “English language learners” (ELL), and about the costs and potential benefits to taxpayers. Although discussions of language revitalization, language policy, and language diversity in education are abundant in the literature, there is very little about the rights, and some would say the responsibility, tribes have in protecting traditional languages by recognizing the sovereignty of their existence and its relevance to policy.

### *Background of the Problem*

Hinton (2001) argues that a dominant national language creates an environment where non-speakers are “automatically disenfranchised” and which leads to conflict, particularly if the government is charged with protecting the equality of its citizens (2001:39). Conventional knowledge insists – fortifying the impression of most Americans – that one language is associated with one country: the French speak French, the Swedes speak Swedish, the British speak one version of English and Americans speak another. This theoretically simplifies education, government communication, and social intercourse – if only it could be realistic in a country where 20 percent of the population speaks a language other than English in the home (Naisbett 1988:188; Malone et al. 2003:5). However, Hinton notes that “a visible pattern can be seen in a number of countries, during the last decade or two, of slowly increasing influence by [Indigenous] peoples in language policies in such a way as to increase the protection of their languages” (2001:39).

That linguistic diversity is a realistic and essential direction for future cultural heritage is evidenced by activism in numerous pockets around the world. In Europe, the resurgence of regional languages such as Welsh, Ulster Scots, Irish, Occitan, Basque, Gascon, and Breton is increasingly evident and accepted, both in business and in educational certification programs. Hornberger asserts that “language policy and language education can serve as

vehicles for promoting the vitality, versatility, and stability of [endangered] languages” (1998:437). Her investigations in Brazil discuss educational opportunities where “*profesores indios*” bring standard curriculum into their communities and interpret it (both linguistically and culturally) into the local minority language. In Peru, bilingual materials have been developed for elementary education in both Quechua and Spanish, and a national referendum in Bolivia had the ambitious goal of including “all thirty of Bolivia’s indigenous languages along with Spanish as subjects and media of instruction in all Bolivian schools” (Hornberger 1998:443). Through innovation, borrowing, and adapting resources, language communities are protecting what remains of their languages, sometimes supported by legislation and sometimes without it. Far from a matter for cultural nostalgia, the resistance of many American Native people to language loss and the resilience of their surviving languages are indications of their vitality, not decline, and of the importance of those languages to the communities fighting to save them. Using the traditional language is intrinsically related to sovereignty.

Grin (2003) explains that language policy must be systematic and goal-directed, logically linking results and methods to arriving at those results, and destined to modify the environment in which the languages are or will be spoken. Additionally, the ultimate goal of language policy is to improve the well-being of stakeholders. “Even if policy measures cannot increase welfare directly, they can create, maintain and develop conditions necessary for welfare to be higher than it would have been in the absence of those measures” (Grin 2003:31). In implementing the linguistic diversity called for by the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, governments appear to be the agencies most capable of regulating compliance. Lip-service had been paid to language minorities since 1948 in the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which decreed that “language cannot be used as a basis for denying the fundamental human rights, outlined in

the Declaration, to any person” (Grin 2003:56). But it was not until 1992 that a legal “Convention”, supported by 28 member states of the Council of Europe, resulted in a Charter for the protection of regional languages (2003:58). The Charter recognizes minority languages as a form of “cultural wealth” and the need to promote and encourage them through “resolute action” including teaching and study, public and private use, and spoken and written literacy. To document the benefits in measurable terms, Grin has grappled with various models, such as the “policy-to-outcome path” framing language use as a social choice, an individual right, fueling political discussion and ultimately being implemented in education and public services (2003:47). In addition, he shows how “cost-effectiveness” of language revitalization measures can be calculated financially, including the “opportunity cost . . . the cost of using a resource in a certain way *instead of using it another way*” (2003:119). However, assessment of the success of a policy or program must address the ways in which “people’s involvement in the selection, design and implementation of language policy” are working, and “capacity, opportunity and desire” (2003:196), not economic considerations, should be the ultimate objectives of policy results (2003:203). “Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness are desirable, but not sufficient conditions for good policies” (2003:196).

Spolsky (2004) cautions that the use of terms such as “language rights, linguistic rights, and linguistic human rights” interchangeably leads to confusion, and the idea of these “rights” is ambiguous. Do “rights” pertain to an individual or to a language community, and are they innate, or must they be articulated and enforced by the state? He further raises important issues about the need for additional legislation when the language rights of minorities are already protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and, before that, by the Fourteenth Amendment (Spolsky 2004:113). Questioning whether language policy can presume to “manage” language at all, he asserts that “The record seems to favor the

pessimists, for there are few cases where language management has produced its intended results” (2004:223).

### *Historical Background*

An examination of the mechanisms resulting in the dominance of English at the expense of Native languages shows that language loss was not inevitable but was in fact the result of a resolute campaign of destruction. Ziff explains that “The subjection of the natives’ economy to that of the English was closely tied to the subjection of their language to English” (1996:509). Subjugation of religious practices was a second compelling reason for the intense onslaught of English as wave after wave of settlers – Christian settlers with missionary fervor, desiring conquest of souls as well as wilderness – arrived. Their fears heightened by the distinct possibility of being swallowed up by a hostile land and with no possibility of turning back, the English settled into a paradoxical, psychological state of “unwitnessing”, in which the horror of their acts against Native people was justified by the purity of their intentions (Lopezina 2006:3).

This incongruity persisted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, aided by the institutionalization of thousands of Native children into the boarding school system. To achieve the goals of civilization, to spare Native people from physical extinction, and to assimilate them fully, government-mandated compulsory education was seen as the means by which all children – especially Indian children – would be brought under the umbrella of progress. After the Civil War, the need for government-run Indian schools as part of the assimilation program was evident, and in 1879, the first off-reservation boarding school for Native children was established by Congress under the management of army officer Richard H. Pratt: the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Pratt had previously acculturated tribal prisoner-students at Hampton University in Florida. By 1894, over 350 boarding institutions

and day schools had enrolled 16,000 Native children, with the goal of making them “sanitized”, Christianized, and suitable for industrial or agricultural work (Knack 1973:277; Kyle 1894:84). Absolute suppression of Native language, religion, and culture was enforced with punishment for those who lapsed into their home language.

Understanding the history behind language loss allows analysis of the mechanisms that supported it. If shame about one’s language and culture can be replaced with pride and clarity, the damage of linguistic conquest may be undone by using the same mechanism in reverse. Where a language was once demeaned as heathen, it could be seen as a sign of heightened status. Where speakers were once punished for speaking a single word of their traditional language, they could earn prestige as teachers, translators, and advocates. As recently as early 2012, a Menominee seventh-grader at a Wisconsin Catholic school was prevented from playing basketball as her punishment for speaking a few words of her tribal language in class – even though the school offers classes in Menominee language, history, and culture. The incident sparked an Internet petition, an apology from the principal to parents, and the promise of a “cultural awareness program” (Menominee 2012:n.p.). Although critics felt that the apology was more lip-service than a reflection of deep understanding, the tribe supported the student with a healing ceremony and protests, and the incident was portrayed in a 2014 film, *Language Healers (Heenetiineyoo3eihiiho)*.

Recognition of language sovereignty and the eventual development of a coherent language policy require an understanding of historical events to avoid repetition of discriminatory actions, duplication of effort, and missed opportunities for analyzing past successes or failures in language revitalization.

*Impact on Education*

Potential generations of new minority-language speakers arriving in the mainstream school system will demand that teachers and administrators possess deeper understanding of the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism. It is widely accepted that language acquisition is a “use it or lose it” proposition, but can classroom teachers accommodate children who have been raised in immersion schools or language nests while accommodating the language needs of immigrant children as well?

Children who speak minority languages at home enter public schools with linguistic skills in their own languages (L1), are able to negotiate “culturally appropriate activities”, and use their L1 to gradually and securely bridge to written and spoken English, the “L2” for minority children (Liu 1998). However, Edelsky warned two decades ago that a standard dialect privileges students who learn it at home before ever entering school and contributes to the appearance of scholastic aptitude, particularly when literacy is assessed merely on mechanical correctness; conversely, language minority children are automatically marginalized the day they enter the school system (Edelsky 1992:325). Learning the dominant language is made more difficult when children are forced to learn new cognitive concepts in a language totally foreign to them. Since the loss of the L1 exceeds the rate at which children learn a second language, the overall linguistic competence of children immersed in the dominant language is undermined (Liu 1998). As children’s options for communication are reduced, they may drift into “semilingualism”, the inability to understand cognitive concepts more demanding than superficial fluency, destabilizing both the L1 and the L2 (Edelsky et al. 2004).

Research and investigation in “bilingual learning” – the concept that it is possible to learn in another language in addition to English – reveal several important points that impact the debate. Using a mother tongue with acceptance in a public sphere like school shores up

a student's sense of identity; empowered students are more confident and potentially successful. It is possible to "know" a concept expressed in one language and understand it at an even deeper level by being able to express and reformulate it in the second language (Kenner et al. 2008:121). When teachers approached students as multilingual, recognizing that school is only one part of their lives, the classroom drew from multiple cultures and was enriched by it. The multiple-language approach draws parents and families into the school environment. Admittedly, many studies on bilingualism have focused on students from homes where English is not spoken and on strategies for helping those students succeed in English-speaking classrooms (Kenner et al. 2008; Lu 1998), rather than on Native students who already speak English as their L1 and who learn traditional language as their L2. Still, a school environment that acknowledges linguistic diversity and respects the cultural knowledge embedded in languages other than English is validating to the growing minority of bilingual speakers.

### *Cultural Resource Management*

If languages were buildings, lighthouses, battlefields, or sacred places, surely they would receive the same rigorous protections given to tangible artifacts of America's past. Cultural resource management, most often associated with archaeology and the proper handling of cultural artifacts, may offer future solutions for treatment of situations involving indigenous language. Such scenarios have been realized before with physical artifacts. After decades of shocking abuse of Native American remains and burial goods, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) became law in 1994 and changed the treatment of this most sensitive aspect of tribal life. Definitions of terms such as "sacred object" and "cultural patrimony" entered the vocabulary, and each tribe had to



determine what types of objects fell into – or had no bearing on – either category in order to receive NAGPRA protections.

Long before NAGPRA, movements such as the Depression-era Historical American Building Survey (1935), laws such as the National Historic Preservation Act (1966), and efforts such as the National Trust for Historical Preservation (1949) sought to provide guidance and increase public awareness to protect American heritage. Usually in response to a threat such as indiscriminate destruction or to allow cool heads to prevail during building booms, these efforts are generally appreciated for what they have done to preserve tangible history. Perhaps a National Endangered Native Languages Act would allow the public, politicians, educators, and corporations to see languages as equally worthy of being supported in tangible ways.

In 2006, three leaders in Native education called for Congress to join in the effort to stop the death of Native language as part of America's heritage. "As use of tribal languages declines, [the National Indian Education Association's] Language Revitalization Initiative is the organization's number one education priority" (United Tribes 2006:73). Desiring two amendments to the Native American Languages Act, Native activists called for "creation of a competitive grant program in the Department of Education to support Native American language immersion programs in Native communities. Citing evidence that effective language programs improve student performance generally, they proposed grants that would create pilot programs for "language nests" and "language survival schools" (United Tribes 2006:73). Indeed, studies show that "Native students who go through an immersion program perform substantially better academically than Native students who had not gone through such a program" (Native Language Law Digest 2006:2).

The Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006 authorized appropriations for funding language grants for revitalization efforts, such as

language nests that (1) “provide instruction and child care through the use of a Native American language for at least 10 children under the age of seven for an average of at least 500 hours per year per student; (2) provide classes in such language for the parents of such students; and (3) use such language as the dominant medium of instruction in the nest” (Congressional 2006:n.p.). Similar specific requirements exist at language survival schools, in addition to teacher training, development of course materials that “service the goal of making all students fluent in such a language and proficient in mathematics, reading, and science” (Congressional 2006:n.p.). However, research by Greymorning (1998) reveals that even 900 hours of annual language instruction in an immersion setting was not enough to produce fluency in children. Additionally, the Act created two hurdles, requiring grants to go to schools with “high concentrations” of Native students and that applicants already have three years of experience in running such a school. Most significant, grant funding expired in 2012 and as of this writing, late in 2013, has yet to be affirmed by Congress in an era considered to be the biggest economic downturn since the Great Depression.

In short, “Money has to be appropriated” (Hunt Peacock 2006:144) – and over decades, not months. A National Endangered Native Languages Act could have timely and enduring benefits: to safeguard language nests, to authorize funds to be jointly managed by the State Historical Preservation Office and local tribal cultural centers, and possibly to reserve a percentage of funds allocated to all federally-funded highway projects for consultation with local tribal authorities for projects such as bilingual signage, place names, and cultural programs.

However, Thomas F. King (2003) and others note that an informal, case-by-case consideration of needs and guidelines may be as effective as an official policy. A low-key, “under the radar” approach – such as allocating funds to State Historic Preservation Officers for language protection in every project – could quietly build consensus regarding a

community's right to pursue revitalization of its traditional language. Using steps utilized when another controversial piece of legislation – the National Environmental Policy Act (1969) – was introduced, the following efforts could be considered:

- Engaging public groups most involved with the resource (the community speaking the language);
- Presenting cultural resource in terms of alternatives (various types of teaching methodologies);
- Utilizing baselines (making programs accountable for numbers and levels of speakers);
- Scoping to include the views of all affected people (elders, linguistic theorists, and other language preservation advocates);
- Developing an informed prediction of reactions before culminating in mitigation and ongoing monitoring (King 2008:292-293).

The Administration for Native Americans, which authorizes \$2 million annually for tribal language revitalization projects, insists that tribes must work on planning grants for a year before applying for an implementation grant due to the critical need for language planning (Hinton 2001:51). Essentially a community-based project and a collaboration between tribal members and linguists, planning establishes realistic goals and strategies for achieving them; maintains long-range focus and autonomy over language policy; centralizes efforts; and prevents (or reduces) turf battles (2001:51). Rather than three separate bailiwicks, these areas of study can be seen as three facets of the same issue and are inseparable and necessary.

### Methodology of the Research

Faculty in the Departments of Native American Studies, Anthropology, Education (including Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Leadership), and Public Health at the University of Montana allowed me the freedom to pursue research on the different facets of language policy relevant to their courses. Because of their flexibility, I was able to take advantage of advice given to me early in my doctoral studies – to focus on a particular area and make every paper in my coursework relevant to my final project. Research into language policy in Dr. Leora Bar-el’s graduate seminar, “Endangered Language Documentation, Preservation, and Revitalization” led me to realize the advantages of a constructive national policy in protecting endangered languages and to reflect on how the United States seems to lag behind efforts in countries considered to have fewer resources. That course, as well as others taught by Dr. Bar-el and Dr. Neyooxet Greymorning, sensitized me to the need to avoid objectifying Native people (in part by referring to the vast cultural variations of Native American tribes as “Native people”) and to challenge continually in my own thinking and that of my students the ways in which the dominant perspective tends to frame Native issues without actually consulting Native scholars, elders, and critics.

It became evident early in my research that a multi-disciplinary approach was necessary to understand fully the future of endangered language revitalization. Thus my research efforts pursued, not only what was known about endangered language studies but also the historical events leading to the suppression of Native American languages, global comparisons in language resurgence, issues represented by Native American studies, and insights from fields as diverse as history, Indigenous epistemology, futuring, public health, education, and cultural resource management. From scholarly publications, I drew upon links between community language use and improvements in local economies and educational outcomes, both within and beyond the United States. Policy development and

criticism offers an area of productive inquiry and limitless research for someone who is not a linguist, not a health practitioner, and not Native American, yet who began doctoral studies with a desire to make a positive contribution to the protection of endangered languages. Dr. Wade Davies and Dr. Richmond Clow provided a foundation in Native American history, illustrating how the themes of conquest, betrayal, resilience, and control of resources have unfolded across more than three centuries. When I explained to peers in a cultural resource management seminar that a gap existed between the rights of tribal people to their traditional languages and the types of protections enjoyed by battlefields and buildings, Dr. Doug MacDonald filled in the gap with the words “National Endangered Languages Act” – legislation which may capture the imagination of the general public, but may never happen if those invested in endangered language resurgence prefer to operate under the radar. Dr. John Lundt and Dr. David Beck allowed me to explore the implications of an inclusive national language policy on education, respectively, through “futuring” and “[Indigenous] ways of knowing.” Courses taught by Dr. Greymorning, Richard Sattler in Anthropology, and Dr. Kathy Humphries in Public Health disclosed the marked deficiencies in health care promised to Native Americans and efforts to improve access to care, an area beyond the scope of this dissertation, but certainly an area that should be pursued by Indigenous scholarship.

From Day 1 of my doctoral program, Dr. Gregory Campbell posed questions regarding the realistic protection of intangible (linguistic) heritage, and ultimately suggested “sovereignty” as an issue as critical to endangered language revitalization as it is to artifacts. Although I would love to claim the phrase “language sovereignty” as my original coinage, it is more accurate to say that it is the inevitable percolation of the input of my teachers, both those in the classroom and those who instructed me from a distance through their writings.

The course of my research was thus narrowed into three main pathways: to gather examples of communities linguistically dominated by an “official” or “national” language recovering linguistic autonomy; to expand on the idea of political sovereignty as it pertains more specifically to language sovereignty; and to find models of language resilience that may be of value to advocates of language recovery in the United States as well as those developing policy.

Because of the grassroots nature of many community language revitalization efforts, Internet resources can provide rapid linkages to the most current status of tribal and regional language programs, but they also present challenges to gathering current and accurate information. I used critical-thinking matrices developed by Meriam Library at California State University – Chico, which I have used over almost two decades of teaching writing courses and, more recently, courses in American Indian history, literature, and issues. The “CRAAP Test” asks students to evaluate the currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose of sources. Just as oral history has not been considered academically relevant until recent times, sources from the World Wide Web are often considered suspect and not appropriately vetted. Yet for communities wanting to create a global stage for their language resources and to promote culture, products, and tourism, creating websites is an inexpensive and fairly low-maintenance instrument that allows the exercise of authority, autonomy, and sovereignty and should not be dismissed as irrelevant; indeed, they may be among the most relevant resources to be found in sustained movement toward language revitalization.

## Chapter Two

### Historical Challenges to Tribal Languages

*I kept the language, tribal manners and usages, sang the songs and danced the dances. I did not come home so “progressive” that I could not speak the language of my father and mother . . . But I soon began to see the sad sight, so common today, of returned students who could not speak their native tongue or worse yet, some who pretended they could no longer converse in their mother tongue . . . So, while the white people had much to teach us, we had much to teach them, and what a school could have been established upon that idea!*

*What a School Could Have Been Established!*  
Luther Standing Bear, 1933

Conquest carries with it the imposition of the conqueror’s point of view, economic advantage, and language. This chapter examines two attitudinal currents, one massive, the other small, neither one always articulated by those who witnessed their flow through history, but inexorably affecting the survival of Indigenous languages in what is now the United States. The dominant current – the organized, intentional, and pervasive infusion of English in the developing nation – foretold the threat of destruction to hundreds of Native languages in daily use after contact. Challenges to the sovereignty of Native languages were rooted in the first contacts between whites and Indigenous people. Yet there was another current, one valuing the diversity of languages and their usefulness as windows into the culture and knowledge of the American landscape, which flowed parallel to the assertion of English and has persisted, often unseen, to the present day. By examining historical stories, relative to the many American languages, this chapter illustrates how the decline in tribal languages reflects their resilience despite an onslaught from a majority that devalued and attacked them. In terms of language sovereignty, it will show that the loss of language is the precursor to the loss of other forms of sovereignty; conversely, reclaiming language sovereignty may be a means to affirming other forms of autonomy and self-determination.

## I. English and Native Languages in Colonial America

When the first English explorers landed on the eastern coast of the United States, they touched a land mass where as many as a thousand mutually unintelligible Indigenous languages were spoken by between ten and 20 million people (McQuade, et al, 1999; Rondo 1999; Woodbury, 1999). From a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective, it seems almost impossible that so many languages could so rapidly have faded to the point of extinction. While it is widely known that organized education in the form of boarding schools sealed the death warrant of many Native language speakers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the reasons for the very early and vigorous injection of English into North America are less broadly understood, yet this past is pertinent to an understanding of the decline in numbers of speakers. Why would Native nations adopt English to the point of surrendering their own languages? Was there something about English that made it irresistibly adaptable and flexible (Newman 1985)? English thrived so quickly, so widely, that a close examination of the earliest interactions between English speakers and Native speakers is needed to explain events leading to near-extinction of Indigenous languages in North America. In fact, an understanding of those early interactions holds hope for revitalization. The issue of written communication lies at the heart of this foreshadowing, for the apparent lack of formal writing made Natives a target for the aggressive educational practices of the English. At the same time, however, the absence of a type of writing recognizable to the conqueror may have actually protected the communication modes of the conquered.

### Permanent Settlement

Coming with families and still-strong connections to England and English culture, the English Puritans arrived having suffered religious persecution and economic deprivation.



Wave after wave of English settlers who would never return home and who arrived as an occupying force planted English onto the North American landscape. In contrast to the Spanish, who overwhelmingly came for wealth and to establish themselves in the global marketplace of the 1600s, the English came to settle and to “act as agents of an expansionist imperialist society” (Longmore 2005:279). Unlike the French, who tended to marry into business partnership with Native women and enjoyed prosperous, if sometimes tense, business interrelationships with their tribal relatives, the English kept unto themselves: separate, distinct, and sternly convinced that plagues were God’s instrument in reducing the heathen presence and preparing the way for their settlement (Calloway 2012:105)

What gave [English] a stronger presence than the other European languages, French and Spanish in particular, came through the ploughshare. On the whole the Spanish had sent armies and priests and taken gold. The French sent fur trappers and looked for trade. The English came to settle and that finally ensured that it was [English] which would be heard . . . from the Atlantic coast to the Appalachian Mountains. (Bragg 2003:154)

Calloway observes that “the clash of Indian and European is often depicted as one between hunters and farmers, but . . . the contest between European *and* Indian farmers made the competition for the best lands deadly and the outcome catastrophic for Native peoples” (2012:102).

As disease killed hundreds of Natives along the Atlantic coast, the numbers of incoming English increased. “By 1640, another two hundred ships had brought fifteen thousand more settlers to New England” and 24,000 new residents had landed, grabbed their piece of earth, and begun to name unfamiliar geographical features (Bragg 2003:148).

### Asserting the English Language

Faced with an unfamiliar climate and conditions, the farming methods the English sought to transplant were failures in New England. Compared to the loamy fields of England, where crops that had thrived had formed the English diet, the soil of New England was rocky and unyielding to the old techniques. Lopenzina (2006), Bragg (2003), Ziff (1996), and others have shown that, beset with agricultural failures and unpredictable neighbors, the English functioned in the vice of unrelenting psychic panic. The naming of rivers and land in the upper Chesapeake by 1607 was “[impelled by] the unarticulated fear of disappearing without a trace, a dread of the fate of Roanoke” (Ziff 1996:511). Names were inscribed into trees so that even they would appear to speak English. Rather than struggle with multisyllabic Native (and heathen) place names, the English installed new names onto geographical features with a sense of righteous entitlement. “As a sign of their occupation and ownership . . . the new settlers quickly took away the Indian place-names and topographical features, filled with aboriginal meanings, and replaced them with the names familiar to seventeenth-century Englishmen” (1996:521).

For example, Pyquoag in present-day Connecticut had a range of meanings from “cleared land” to “dancing place” or a “place where the Indians celebrated their public games” (Chapin 1853) and Agawam meant “lowland, marsh, or meadow” (Lucas 2008). These long-established sites had names with meanings useful, both practically and symbolically, to the Native people, but useless to the land-craving English. Fear of the unknown drove the new settlers to create familiarity out of chaos: “Pyquoag, for example, quickly became Wethersfield, and Ipswich replaced Agawam” (Ziff 1996:521). Implemented for practical and ostensibly innocent logistical reasons, the renaming of places reflected the first step in denial of the Indigenous presence. “Ipswich, Norwich, Boston, Hull, several Londons, Cambridge, Bedford . . . Dartmouth – there are hundreds in New England. New England, those two simple words, say a very great deal” (Bragg 2003:151). Mountains and

waterways more often were called by their Native names, perhaps because they were reference points rather than owned and settled places. Some rivers, such as the Susquehanna, Potomac, and Miramichi retain their traditional names to the present day. In contrast, farmable places where settlers could have neighbors needed names, and naming towns created a psychological connection with familiar landscapes back in England. Furthermore, naming legitimized their settlement activities on new soil and exalted English historical connections to the old country “as part of an unbroken series of events stretching back through English history and pointing forward to the Anglicization of the wild. The common tongue and the literary tradition carried by it were powerful colonizing forces, assimilating unprecedented experience to a familiar grammar” (Ziff 1996:521). Woven tightly with the establishment of settlements and the naming of towns, the assertion of English place names was as essential to conquest as the original meanings had been to Native people since ancient times.

However, Spack observes that “As linguistic scholars Edward Tuttle and Raoul Smith have documented, once English colonists had learned enough of an [Indigenous] language to guarantee survival, they no longer felt compelled to draw on Native sources for language, although inevitably Native words, in adapted form, continued to extend the English language” (Spack 2002:3). Former flatlanders coined names such as *foothill*, *gap*, *bluff*, *divide*, *watershed*, and *underbrush*. When no known equivalent existed, or when the Native word defied pronunciation, they created new ones: *mud hen*, *rattlesnake*, *garter snake*, *bullfrog*, *potato bug*, and *ground hog* (Bragg 2003:150). “By the end of the seventeenth century, English was being heard and taught along more than a thousand miles of the eastern coast” (2003:153).

Exacerbating the psychological discomfort of colonists was the contradiction between the conviction of their own superiority and the reality that they were dependent on

the goodwill and ecological knowledge of Native people. The powerful forces of economic survival and religious obsession meant to the English that their language had to inundate linguistic terrain, both for their own security and to legitimize their entrenched presence (Longmore 2005). To accomplish this required a certain type of blindness to Native communication methods established as well as, or longer than, alphabetic writing but repudiated by colonists.

### Politics and Christianity

From the perspective of the English, hunting, fishing, and political tribal alliances had to be learned quickly and communicated in English, with reduced references to Native landmarks. “Very early in the history of [explorer reports] one encounters a sense on the part of the writers that the conquest of America is dependent upon the conquest of the Indians’ languages. . . The subjection of the [Natives’] economy to that of the English was closely tied to the subjection of their language to English” (Ziff 1996:509). Few settlers had the inclination to learn multisyllabic terms and, perhaps taking advantage of Native curiosity and willingness to learn English, settlers compelled some Natives to live on English ships and travel to England, either as volunteers or captives. Perhaps the most famous example of a Native person embroiled in the English claims of dominance was Tisquantum, the Patuxet Good Samaritan and Christian convert who in 1619 returned from fifteen years of forced association with his English enslavers to find his home community wiped out from disease. Perhaps to ensure his own long-term political value, “Squanto” taught the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony subsistence strategies that allowed them to survive the winter of 1621.

The intensity of the English regarding the assertion of their own culture was inseparable from the propagation of Christianity and the elimination of any semblance of heathen religious practice. The sheer numbers of speakers and the permanence of their

settlements ensured that English would reverberate across the landscape, and that it would be braided with Christian teachings. By the generation following the Pilgrims, “Christian schools were set up for the [Natives] to teach them English, with the single perception that this was a better way to speak”; clearly, “Native Americans had to learn English to understand about God and be saved” (Bragg 2003:151). Conversely, without English, the English could not control the conversion process, and – mirroring the English court system, where land disputes were heard – English was quickly linked to land ownership and economic interests. The conversion of Native people was a required element in the Virginia Company charters as early as 1606 (Szasz 2007). The other side of the coin of Christian teaching was utter denial of sacred practices among Native people. In fact, Indigenous knowledge was equated with demonism, so its eradication was justified by Christian fervor. Spack (2002) notes that “in the colonial era the route to Christianity was increasingly believed to be traversable through assimilation into the English-speaking world, so English began to replace [Indigenous] languages as the conduit for conversion”, granting Native languages the contradictory status of expedient but “defective: incapable of conveying European abstract thought” (2002:3).

A surprising linguistic result of Christian preaching was its profound influence on equalizing the American sound of English. “Interminably long sermons from the pulpit no doubt contributed to the early erosion of original regional accents. Being crammed into a single boat and forced into cramped intimacy might have speeded this up” (Bragg 2003:151). In the beginning, though, many “Englishes” converged in a relatively small geographic space.

### Diversity of English

English settlers arrived speaking multiple varieties of English. Although the early English settlers came from all over England, a substantial – and linguistically influential – number came from sixteen southern and western English counties, each with a distinctive mode of speech – a “family of dialects” (Longmore 2007:525). “Some 60 percent of male Puritans in the Great Migration of 1629 to 1640 hailed from a nine-county region” in eastern England (2007:523). One county’s speakers might drop their “h’s”, while neighbors pronounced h’s clearly but dragged “o” into a “u’ sound or “s” into a “z.” Rhotic speakers, meaning those who pronounce their “r’s”, came to dominate American English, while those who pronounce “r” as “ah” were relegated to small pockets. The southwestern English usage of “Ah be” instead of “I am” became ensconced in the South, “new speech . . . manufactured out of old materials” (2007:526).

By the time English Quakers settled with Germans and British from the Celtic fringe – Wales, Scotland, and Ireland – in William Penn’s Pennsylvania settlement in the early 1680s, a form of linguistic leveling had already taken place. “Vulgar” class markers in pronunciation – “*cover as kivver, engine as ingine . . . and Sarah as Sary*” – became “stylistic variants” rather than regional identifiers or indicators of social status (Longmore 2007:531). In other words, leveling made it more difficult for English speakers to identify one another’s place of origin, which would have been closely aligned with economic background – farmer, plasterer, cooper, or nobleman – and social status. Thus some of the social hierarchy of Britain faded away in colonial speech.

In addition to leveling, the linguistic process of simplification helped to create a colonial English that differed from that spoken in England. Resulting from the mixing of dialects in which speakers of the same language unconsciously select certain features from contributing dialects, simplification seems to occur in attempts to make communication clearer (Longmore 2007:517); it has the added benefit (from a nation-building point of view)

of increasing identification and affinity between speakers, as well of distinguishing their speech from that of the old country. A third process identifies a new standard language called a “koine” – a “compromise dialect”, a new variety *in addition to* the original dialects which does not change them (Longmore 2005: 280). Unlike code-switching, in which a Cornish immigrant might speak a formal version of English in the marketplace but revert to his childhood language at home with family, a koine reflects the desire of settlers for the “solidarity” of a “single speech community in the new geographical and social environment” (Longmore 2007:520). Furthermore, unlike pidgins and creoles, which may develop in a generation, the speakers of a koine come from two mutually intelligible dialects. A koine develops over a long period of time – much longer than the time needed to create an expedient creole or pidgin for the completion of business transactions. The koine manifests as a common language. While often unconsciously developed, the koineization that took place in early American immigrant English appears to have been deliberate, part of status-seeking on the part of colonials who aspired to “linguistic correctness as a tool of social mobility” (Longmore 2005:281). The colonists moved away from speech that marked status in England and moved towards new status markers that differentiated their speech from the English spoken back in the homeland.

Koineization is not inevitable, but it does appear in societies where immigrants converge to some new locale where social mixing can take place. Industrial towns in modern-day northern Europe, Spanish settlements in Latin America, and English communities in New Zealand, Canada, and Australia have all produced koines – remarkable in light of the distances they covered (Longmore 2005:520). At the beginning of settlement, speech exhibits “fluctuation and inconsistency” in all aspects of speech, from pronunciation to grammar. But over three or four generations, variation shrinks as speakers make compromises about formal and informal usage, discard some forms, and incorporate

vocabulary unique to their environment and experience. Depending on reproduction rates, children seem to make the most profound contribution to the compromise dialect (2005:527). So by the dawn of the eighteenth century, with increased mobility compared to the relative isolation of the first generations, an English koine had become established in the colonies.

Once the structure of American English had been established, newer immigrants, “imitating native speakers as a matter of course, [used established] speech ways as their model” (Longmore 2005:522). Despite the influx of fifty thousand Irish by 1720 and later waves of immigrants that made Pennsylvania fairly equal parts English, Scots, and German by the mid-eighteenth century, new speakers tended to have more impact on vocabulary than on the American English koine (Bragg 2003:154). Also escaping religious persecution, German speakers produced a hybrid language, Pennsylvania Dutch (Deutsch) continued to be the language of the Amish and the Mennonites, and thousands of Scots fled the catastrophic loss at Culloden and eviction by English landlords (2003:154). Each group brought regional linguistic differences that both influenced and were subsumed by colonial English. In addition, Dutch, French, and African languages were likely heard and had some influence on vocabulary and speech. Dutch in particular left its influence over place names like Breukelen (Brooklyn) and Haarlme (Harlem), and in daily-use vocabulary such as *waffle*, *coleslaw*, *snoop*, and *sleigh*. The word *boss*, in the way one might speak to an employer without calling him “master”, was a uniquely Dutch-American conception (2003:153). In the eighteenth century, as a new government was realized, Americanisms such as *congressional*, *gubernatorial*, *land office*, *log cabin*, and *presidential* found their way into the American lexicon (2003:154).

Another reason that speakers “are motivated toward convergence to attain one or more of these goals – efficiency in communication, social approval, and positive social



identity” – is that they are all connected to a fourth motivation, “pursuit of material interests” (Longmore 2007:530). As colonists endeavored to lose their provincial differences and found themselves in a collective effort to settle, move, resettle, and establish themselves, they made both deliberate and unconscious choices in speech to facilitate economic interaction. The resulting American blend created a surprising “propriety of language” noted by elite visitors and Americans themselves. In 1764, Lord Gordon noted that English was “spoken by all ranks, in a degree of purity and perfection, surpassing any but the polite part of London”, and others noted that the “Suffolk whine, the Yorkshire clipping or the Newcastle guttural” were non-existent, at least in the circles in which they traveled. Witherspoon, the Scottish president of Princeton, also noted the “purity and perfection” of colonial speech (Longmore 2005:281) and attributed this superior vernacular to the “obvious reason” that Americans were “unsettled” and mobile and were “not so liable to local peculiarities either in accent or phraseology” (Bragg 2003:155).

Runaway indentured servants could often be identified by their regional accents. A 1721 poster described a runaway as “aged about Twenty Years: he is a West-Country-man and talks like one.” A similar ad placed in 1763 referred to a runaway as “an English girl” who “speaks in the North Country Dialect” (Longmore 2005:282). Within a century after settlement, accents from the homeland were distinguishable from standard American speech.

### Injection of Native Vocabulary

While there is no denying that English was imposed on Native communities, two large categories of Native words made their way into English vocabulary, most from the time of earliest contact. The first consisted of words identifying flora and fauna words like “*raccoon, opossum, geoduck, hickory, squash*” (abbreviated from *asquutasquash*) in

addition to *moose*, *terrapin*, and *hominny* (Bevington 1996:1; Bragg 2003:151). The other category consisted of “culture” words: *toboggan*, *tipi*, *wigwam*, *potlatch*, and *wampum* (Bevington 1996:1); *papoose*, *squaw*, and *moccasin* also entered the American English vocabulary (Bragg 2003:148). The lack of equivalents in English forced the use of Native terms and accounts for the fact that this was often a one-way process. North American languages seem to have resisted the mixing seen in central American languages with Spanish. For example, the Lakota word for chair (*čan?akaŋyaŋkapi*) translates to “they sit on wood” and the word for clock (*mazaskaŋskaŋ*) is translated as “metal in continuous motion” (Bevington 1996:1). The expedience of using one syllable to replace several was no motivation for Native speakers to adopt English terms.

It should be noted that there was in some quarters an appreciation for Native language. William Penn remarked: “I know not a Language spoken in Europe that hath word of more sweetness and greatness, in Accent and Emphasis, than theirs” (Bragg 2003:149). But perhaps the best-documented appreciation of Native languages, explained in the following section, is that of a religious rebel using a subversive strategy invented by a fifteenth-century Czech philosopher to teach Native languages widely and successfully. Roger Williams’ rejection of Puritan rhetoric allowed him to establish that tribes were fully competent to engage in business dealings – most significantly, the sale of land.

#### Roger Williams, the *Janua*, and the *Key*

Roger Williams used the language pedagogy of his era to affirm “the radical notion that Native Americans could and did possess land and that, therefore, they could dispose of it as they chose” (Field 2007:364) – a concept crucial to the establishment of Providence Plantations and one that estranged him from the English legal and cultural mainstream. In creating the *Key to the Language of America* (1643) – “a pragmatic phrasebook designed to

aid travelers and settlers” (Lepore 1998:31), Williams was using language-teaching conventions created two hundred years earlier by Jan Amos Comenius in his *Janua Linguarium*, which matched pictures to words in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Eventually variations of the *Janua* were published in numerous European and Near Eastern languages. The *Janua* were revolutionary in that they promoted “the prospect of universal knowledge and linguistic competence” and held great appeal for intellectuals, members of the English Parliament, and opponents of Charles I – exactly the people Williams needed to persuade that Natives could legally transfer land ownership to his utopian community (Field 2007:361). “That a form developed by a Jesuit missionary to teach Latin to Indians could be deployed by Protestants to teach vulgar tongues suggests the dangerous versatility of the *janua* genre” (Field 2007:364).

In order to thwart the idea that only the English king could grant land in America to English colonists, Williams had to persuade anti-royalists of Native sovereignty. Williams’ “unassuming” guide to learning Narragansett “[worked] to disrupt a traditional ideology of conquest and conversion and to instill, in its stead, Williams’s version of the New World” in which America’s language was Native language, that Indians were politically important. “Despite its didactic structure, the goal of the *Key* is, then, not so much to teach Londoners how to speak to Native Americans, but rather to teach them how to think about America” (2007:366). In London, embroiled in civil war, Williams made a persuasive case in 1644 about the presumption of an English king expanding Christendom in the name of nationhood. To Williams, the two should be separate and it was not necessary for Natives to be Christianized for them to be valued (2007:357, 373). Williams’ *Key* was “structured as to embody a sympathetic presentation of Indian life and a critically ironic comment upon European civilization in general and New England society in particular . . . the Indian viewpoint increasingly serves to expose the shortcomings of the English” (Ziff 1996:520).

Combining vocabulary, religious verse, and anthropological analysis, the chapters of the *Key* served as a force to humanize Native people to urban English in London and Boston.

Williams' contemporary and Bible translator John Eliot had composed a Bible "which flows from English into Algonquian [and] carries the Gospel to the Indians but finds nothing in their language worth carrying back" (Field 2007:368). Reflected in his opus, Eliot's purpose was to Christianize, control, and change the Native world. In contrast, Roger Williams' *Key* "seems to privilege Narragansett, for the text flows from Narragansett into English" (2007:368), displaying Williams' desire to create an area of mutual understanding between traditional cultures.

#### "Unwitnessing" and Psychological Drive

The written word took on heroic importance in colonial times as history and as testimony. The psychological duress under which the English functioned was severe, and "it is difficult to overemphasise the fact that they came with the Bible in English . . . they lived every hour of their days by that Bible. For the word of God in English, their predecessors . . . had suffered exile, persecution, torture and death" (Bragg 2003:146). Their particular angst-ridden version of Christianity, their drive to create a New England, and their dependence on their English identity meant that they were not about to change, adapt, or "yield its language to anyone" (2003:146). If English expansion was a natural extension of English history and culture, then colonists would have been well aware that writing about history gives the victor a "literall advantage," as Samuel Purchas noted, that "literacy makes history possible" (Lepore 1998:26). In other words, the occupiers would write the history that generations of future readers would take as historical gospel.

The contradictions between Christian teachings and the realities of colonial life are captured in Lopenzina's term *unwitnessing*. The "repeated acts of denigration and violence

towards Native peoples. . . stood in sharp relief to the rhetoric of uplift driving so much of the colonial endeavor” (Lopenzina 2006:3). As with trauma experienced by an individual, “a trauma operating on a cultural level, driving colonists to spontaneously distort and amend their collective memory” is another piece of the puzzle explaining why the English language took over a vast continent already peopled with speakers. Distortion by colonists “can be seen in effect almost every time a European observer commented upon Native culture” (2006:3). This process of denial taken to an extreme degree involved conflicting drives; for example, colonists recorded “customs, traditions, and spiritual practices” and then claimed that Native people had no religion, schooling, or culture so that they could fill the alleged gap with Christianity (2006:4). This schizophrenic mindset forced colonists to manipulate memory and narrative into a story, or multiple stories, they could justify. “Once having denied the existence of Native culture, it was a small step to deny or suppress the presence of the Indian himself” (2006:4).

This wholesale refutation of all Native values may explain the lack of recognition of Indigenous texts or works that function as well as or better than alphabetic texts in English. Rather than a result of colonization, the use of alphabetic writing by Natives may have been the continuation of forms of communication. “Like some other European products such as guns, blankets, and cookware, writing had a durability and a transportability that made it desirable, a force that lent credence regardless of what use was made of it” (Lopenzina 2006:15). Although reading and writing are thought of as the beginning of the end for Indigenous communities, this may be more the self-congratulatory rhetoric of the dominant culture, the writers of history, those who created the evidence with which we are left. The truth may lie closer to the idea of continuation: “Through an engagement with European literary practices, many Native communities, particularly the Algonquian . . . were able to sustain a period of stability and keep alive traditional modes of existence that were

otherwise threatened . . . Native communities in the Northeast sought out and utilized alphabetic writing to preserve tradition and community in the colonial period” (2006:10).

However, even accommodating the English, in English, could backfire. Lepore (1998) notes that many Natives in New England learned English as a tool for commerce and other business dealings, not out of “any particular loyalty to the English” or to Christianity, although many Native people lived in “praying towns” and even attended church services in order to have easy access to food and other necessities. Lopenzina argues that “Natives were quick to intuit the utility of what I call ‘alphabetic writing,’ and rather than resisting its presence, actively sought it out, just as they sought out and incorporated a host of other European trade goods and practices into their traditional routines” (Lopenzina 2006:10). It was not uncommon for Natives to intermingle with English without assimilating (to the extent they would have been allowed). However, “Dressing as an Englishman and worshipping the Christian God were of course much less ambiguous; those practices clearly marked an Indian as having a compromised relationship with the English” (Lepore 1998:42). One example suggests that the advanced literacy enjoyed by John Sassamon, a “praying Indian” of the Massachuseuk tribe, contributed to his death.

Sassamon’s substantive input to Eliot’s Algonquian translation of the Bible – perhaps more than he received credit for – may have placed him in a vulnerable position in the opinion of both the English and his own tribe. Eliot admitted that “despite the fact that he had been dabbling in the Massachusett language for some four or five years, he had ‘yet but little skill in their language’”, suggesting that the bilingual Natives – Sassamon, John Printer and his brother Job Nesuton – had done the translations, but they had never received credit (Lopenzina 2006:201, 203). Sassamon also served Metacom (given the moniker “King Philip” by the English) as scribe and translator from 1662 until his death (Lepore 1998:33). Sassamon’s position bridging the two worlds put him in contact with legal documents that

may have transferred ownership of lands (Lepore 1998, 42). Since Metacom could not read, but was no fool, he was clearly cognizant that he was at a disadvantage in his dealings with the English. Either through error or deception, Sassamon seems to have conveyed false or incomplete information about King Philip's enemy *sachems*. Sassamon's conversion to Christianity (including increasingly tiresome Christian "proselytizing") and ready adoption of English ways may have made him a target (Lepore 1998:25). Both English and Natives "considered fully clothed Indians confusing and dangerous" (1998:80), and in a mutually distrustful era, his ability to walk between English and Wampanoag worlds made him "mysterious, potent, and dangerous" – capable of undermining King Philip and English alike (1998:42). Sassamon's death in January 1675 – an apparent drowning with forensic evidence indicating strangulation before his body entered the water – was a symptom of suppressed hostilities rising to the surface after decades of Native endurance (1998:22).

#### Non-Verbal Communication

Although white settlers would have seen *awikhigans*, hieroglyphic symbols left on tree trunks or birch bark to announce the results of hunts or battles, they either could not or would not recognize them as a centuries-old tradition of bulletin boards conveying information to the next passer-by who could read them. To the English, wampum were mere shells, a reflection of Native ignorance and gullibility, but to the Iroquois, they were history. Strung together to bind "words to deeds", wampum could be read as easily as text to an Englishman (Lepore 1998:15; Calloway 2012:165). Elsewhere in the Americas, cotton string and knots formed *quipu* or *kuipu* which served as mnemonic devices to recall historical, legal, ritual, and business events, and the Spanish eventually conceded that "whatever could be done with books . . . could also be done with *quipus*" (Lepore 1998:70).

The recording methods used by tribes for centuries were not recognizable as history or literature to Europeans. Tribes living in the interior used winter counts – pictographic records spanning from the end of one winter to the beginning of the next – to accompany oral history-telling and to jog the speaker’s memory if needed to remember historical events. Maps, grave markings, string balls, history baskets, and birchbark scrolls also served as records, legends, and announcements. Far from being recognized as writing in an alternative form, they were labeled “grotesque” by Jesuit priests and – predictably – “demonic” by the English. Yet the Huron and other tribes could translate them in detail, unpacking symbols and elaborating on their meanings. The word *Ozhibii’ige*, meaning “to write”, is reportedly the root from which *Ojibwe* is derived. As some tribes referred to themselves as “the people,” the Ojibwe may have referred to themselves as “the writers.” Ehrdich notes that elaborate rock paintings “were as familiar and recognizable to the Ojibwe tradition as, say, highway and airport and deer crossing signs to contemporary Americans” (Lopenzina 2006:88). Yet more than information, such signs teach, interpret dreams, and explain the connection between geography and spiritual life. The Mi’kmaq of Eastern Canada used hieroglyphs to accompany oral prayer, generating over 2,700 graphemes corresponding to ideas, tribal records, and maps; their non-alphabetic script was called “suckerfish writing” because of its similarity to impressions left by the fish in the soft mud of rivers (Lopenzina 2006:89).

A syncretic use of alphabetic writing to record oral agreements, sometimes called “orature”, bridged both Native and English traditions. Massachusetts speakers used written texts in their own language to document land dealings among themselves and between the tribe and colonists, as in the case of the 1752 petition of the Mashpee to establish the tribe’s right of ownership of land, written in Massachusetts (Lopenzina 2006:263). A “particular form of transaction referred to as ‘recorded oral land transfers’ were written documents that



recorded oral exchanges of former transactions”, even using quotation marks to represent spoken agreements (2006:253). The Mohegans of Brotherton, New York, were able to use written, public documents to secure their land holdings – in other words, to use the colonists’ own legalese to “deploy the discourse of western expansionism to their own advantage” (2006:318).

Critics claim that such teaching perpetuates the idea of Native resistance to writing, or that writing harmed Natives, or that they regarded it with “puerile awe . . . as a kind of totemic magic” (Lopenzina 2006:52). Non-Indigenous culture tends to relegate Native literature to oral myths but not much else, and sees the short story or novel as proof of Native assimilation into English conventions (2006:21). Roger Williams may have contributed to the perception that literacy replaced oral traditions; despite his rebellious actions against Puritans, he was “hesitant to read” Native symbols so that he wouldn’t be a “party to blasphemy” (2006:132). The connections between writing and Christianity meant that the English had to become “efficient at concealing or redefining the existence of Native writing” – so much so that later generations could dismiss the idea of Native writing systems as preposterous (2006:135). Even today, Native historical systems may be recognized more as arts and crafts than as chronological records going back centuries.

### “Drop the Peculiarities”

More than eighty years after Roger Williams strove to create the awareness of Native people as possessing rights to sell property, Hugh Jones and Noah Webster were among the first to codify the English language of America, Jones with a grammar, *An Accidence of the English Tongue* (1724), and Webster with a dictionary (1806); a minister and a teacher, respectively, neither could be considered a linguist in the modern sense, but their powers of observation helped document and influence prolific changes to the colonial English

language. Earlier commentators had approached the linguistic differences as an extension of empire, but Jones, who had “enlisted in the trans-Atlantic movement to reform English usage throughout the British Empire” made the outlandish claim that colonials spoke the preferred standard for English. More than mere “boosterism”, Jones’ claims were supported by a broad range of observers (Longmore 2007:515). Webster, growing up a few decades later in an era of revolution, envisioned a separation between English and American speakers of English that was more than superficial and which met a need perceived by the common person. Webster’s *American Spelling Book* or *The Blue-Backed Speller* sold for fourteen cents in general stores, and within a hundred years had sold sixty million copies, second only to the Bible, making it “one of the most influential books in the development of English” (Bragg 2003:157). Webster’s dictionary eliminated “extra” letters, such as the unheard “u” in “humour” and “colour.” The second “g” in “waggon”, the second “l” in “traveler”, and the “k” in “logick” were deemed unnecessary and incorrect; “plough” was simplified into “plow.” Webster sought to influence pronunciation as well; thus the aristocratic clipped “cemet’ry” and “laborat’ry” became “cemetery” and “laboratory.” Webster and other teachers relied on competition to reinforce correctness.

The famous American spelling bee was born and became part of the social and self-improvement life of every town and village in the land . . . It shows Americans at their self-improvement best. It shows that they treat their language with care and seriousness. It continues the John Adams notion that correct speech and spelling is all the vital equipment an American needs to achieve great things. (Bragg 2003:158)

The impetus for codifying American English as separate and superior to the English of England was Webster’s vision of a “system of instruction” that would increase literacy beyond reading of the scriptures so that Americans could write and speak as well.

Borrowing from a system developed in England in the sixteenth century, Webster used “the alphabet method [which] taught children to use the alphabet and letter combinations as sounding devices with which to build words and phrases” (Unger 1998:45). Building from

simple to increasingly difficult words and relying on recitation, Webster's method deviated from English systems by standardizing capitalization and punctuation in addition to spelling and pronunciation. Webster believed that a simplified system would ease the education of immigrants and children, creating a fairly uniform North American language so that "the people of one quarter of the world will be able to associate and converse together like children of the same family" (Bragg 2003:157). Encouraged by his mentor, Benjamin Franklin, who had printed *Dilworth's New Guide to the English Tongue* as an early volume of correctness, Webster expanded his publications to encourage the self-education of adults – almanacs, histories, and geographies (Unger 1998:105).

The democratization of English created the expectation that Americans would educate themselves beyond the classroom. However, it also created an alphabetic myopia, so that traditional Indigenous communication systems would generation after generation no longer be recognized for their historical richness and depth of information. Yet the hidden nature of non-alphabetic communication and oral traditions, "due simply to their means of transmission, offer a kind of seclusion, control, and even anonymity that make them ideal vehicles for cultural resistance . . . [The meaning] remains invisible to those on stage" (Lopezina 2006:254).

The promotion of, not just English, but the English of America in a revolutionary age caused American English to be aligned with patriotism. John Adams proudly forecasted that North America would be peopled by a hundred million souls, all speaking English, and that English would be the "language of the world." Thus English became connected in the emerging national consciousness to America itself, "not unlike . . . Elizabeth I had done in England" (Bragg 2003:157).

## II. Interpreters and Miscommunications in the Journey of Lewis and Clark

In June 1791, on a pleasure trip to Long Island, Secretary of State and future president Thomas Jefferson created a vocabulary list of Unkechaug words (Cohen 2010), presumably in the same spirit in which he recorded descriptions of plants, trees, and other natural phenomena in his role as a leading member of the American Philosophical Society. Certainly the allure of languages would have appealed to Jefferson, so often characterized as a Renaissance man, and the fact that he would commit the words to paper suggests interest, curiosity, and a sense of cultural preservation. However, Jefferson “wrote that even then, only three old women remained who could still speak the language fluently” (Cohen 2010:C1), so along with his scholarly inclination to represent the sounds of Unkechaug on paper, he was no doubt aware that it would not continue to be spoken much longer. Stephen E. Ambrose observed that Jefferson possessed a “passion for Indian language, believing he would be able to trace the Indians’ origins by discovering the basis of their language” (1996:203). It was the past, rather than any future necessity to use Native languages, that had captured Jefferson’s interest.

John Pickering, a prominent linguist of the time and occasional speaker at meetings of the American Philosophical Society, classified Native languages of the American coast into four categories (Delaware, Iroquois, southern languages spoken in Florida, and Karalit in the far north spoken by “Eskimaux”), but Jefferson claimed that “there will be found probably twenty in America, for one in Asia, of those radical languages, so called because if they were ever the same they have lost all resemblance to one another” (Wolfart 1967:158). The uniqueness of American animals, plants, and languages would further remind the British and the French – competitors for resources on the North American continent – that the American nation was a sovereign entity with distinctive cultural characteristics. Wolfart (1967) suggests that Jefferson’s interest in Native languages was “non-linguistic”, more a

result of his political role as President of the United States and a public relations strategy to advance the idea of American uniqueness. Still, the American Philosophical Society, where Jefferson was a member for 47 years and president for 17 of those years, frequently produced reports on scholarly documentation regarding Native languages, including a German-Delaware grammar and a English-German-Onondaga-Delaware dictionary produced by Moravian missionaries in the early 1800s (1967:155). Jefferson wrote in 1809:

I have now been thirty years availing myself of every possible opportunity of procuring Indian vocabularies to the same set of words. My opportunities were probably better than will ever occur again to any person having the same desire. I had collected about fifty, and had digested most of them in collateral columns. (Wolfart 1967:156).

When Jefferson commissioned Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to lead an expedition through newly-claimed territories all the way west to the Pacific Ocean, “procuring Indian vocabularies” was among the tasks with which they were charged. Authorizing this linguistic documentation was a goal both admirable in its scope and troubling in its treatment of Native languages as inanimate cultural artifacts. Jefferson’s manuscripts were turned over to the American Philosophical Society, which became a repository of linguistic knowledge during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Albert Gallatin, the Swiss-born Secretary of the Treasury during Jefferson’s presidency and the Lewis and Clark Expedition, also had a profound interest in Native American languages as objects of categorization; in 1836 he produced the first comprehensive “comparative treatment” of Native languages, an achievement for which he was heralded as the Linnaeus of American linguistics (Wolfart 1967:159). Like many nineteenth-century linguists, and even many in the early twentieth century, Gallatin was more concerned with linguistic data than preserving living languages. Politically, he “focused on western geography and the future expansion of the United States” (Ronda 1998:2) and advocated assimilation of Native people, inevitably requiring the decline of the very languages he was engaged in documenting.

In this environment intent on scientific data collection, Lewis and Clark were instructed “to proclaim American sovereignty over the area, prepare the way for American commerce with the tribes, and gather as much information as possible” (Calloway 2012: 281). Gathering vocabularies of the tribal languages encountered on the expedition was to be in the same spirit as collecting specimens of botanical, mineral, and zoological phenomena of interest. Much to their credit, they did “put a major effort into attempting to render words from various Indian languages into an English spelling” (Ambrose 1996:203). Trader Charles MacKenzie observed the “warm disputes” between the two Mandan-speaking French scouts hired by Lewis regarding “the meaning of every word that was taken down by the captains”, a task they approached with diligence and considerable investment of time (Ambrose 1996:204). The collection of linguistic data was not always with cooperation on the part of the Natives. MacKenzie noted: “As the Indians could not well comprehend the intention of recording their words they concluded that the Americans had a wicked design upon their country” (1996:204). Despite this intuitive suspicion, the proclaimed goals of the Corps of Discovery were to assert the American presence to the French and British and to establish trade between Natives and Americans.

The irony of Jefferson’s fascination with linguistic data is that it reflects his awareness that the Corps would inevitably encounter other languages, yet he did not seem to equip them with useful linguistic tools other than charts for listing words. “Although reluctant to second-guess one of the best-managed expeditions in history,” one observer notes, “I suggest that Lewis and Clark should have made sure that they and the corps’ three non-commissioned officers [Gass, Ordway, and Pryor] were conversant in Plains Indians sign language. . . . They should have spent more time during the long winter months at Fort Mandan and later at Fort Clatsop, on the Pacific, learning their ABCs from Drouillard” (Hunt

2006:15). Knowing at least enough sign to assure tribal people of their peaceful intentions and future trade would have been expedient on more than one occasion.

As it turned out, one of the great vulnerabilities of the Corps was their dependence upon translators, and it would have served the expedition well if they had respected the languages they encountered as a traveler through France might have realized the need to shift to German at one border and to Italian at another. Although they immediately met traders and agents who conveyed “a good Deal [sic] of information”, they could not immediately know the character and private agendas of their interpreter staff (Ronda 1998:16). Opportunities to know Native methods of communication were limited, so Lewis, Clark, and crew could not reasonably have been expected to know them in advance. In fact, not knowing the languages forced Lewis and Clark to rely on interpreters whose social networks and knowledge would prove invaluable – perhaps more so than had they left Camp Dubois ready to converse with Native peoples in their own tongues.

#### The Potential for Confusion, the Difficulties of Translation

When the Corps of Discovery headed west in May 1804 on its mission of exploration and nationhood, Jefferson gave only one order regarding a specific tribe based on sources more than thirty years old. “Jefferson recognized the central role played by Sioux Indians in Missouri Valley trade and politics. He did not know the full complexity of the system that bound together British traders, Sioux hunters, and village farmers, nor did he realize just how far west Sioux power had expanded” (Ronda 1997:7). Lewis and Clark had been charged by President Jefferson to explain to Native peoples that they themselves were not traders, but that they had come supplied with a mere sampling of goods that would be available in the future.

In addition, it was in America's interests for Native trade relationships with the French and Canadians to be reduced so that American sovereignty could be asserted. Ideally, sovereignty would flow into the West peacefully and persuasively. But, despite honorable intentions and vast preparation, the first impression the Corps made set them up to be misunderstood. To Native peoples already accustomed to white traders, the appearance of a large party of white people with goods and gifts clearly indicated a trade relationship. Yet Lewis and Clark wanted to emphasize that they were not a trade expedition, only that they wanted to open the way for trade out of St. Louis. The difficulty of translating abstract concepts – that the expedition did not consist of traders per se (despite the goods and gifts they brought with them) but rather harbingers of some future trade relationship would surpass those with Canadians and the French traders. The “concept of exploration as a national undertaking had no precedent in tribal life. A keelboat filled with what seemed an endless store of goods only served to confuse the question” (Ronda 1998:26). The additional subtleties involved in suggesting that long-standing trade relationships should be surrendered to allow the Americans to have a trade monopoly and thus eventual sovereignty were even more delicate to express.

“As Lewis and Clark understood it, American policy was to allow such business activity by foreign nationals to continue so long as it did not threaten federal sovereignty [and] . . . as long as they did not distribute any symbols of political authority such as flags and medals” (Ronda 1998:93). And, while a third goal was peaceful change and humane truces among Native peoples, Lewis and Clark did not understand that war was basic to social hierarchy and self-governance of numerous tribes. The Corps ideal of intertribal peace was impractical to most tribes. Warfare and conflict were an age-old method of determining tribal hierarchy. For example, young Hidatsa warriors believed that truces and peace left the dead unavenged and restless. Without war as a means of building a young



man's reputation and with the eventual deaths of the current elders, there would be no way for tribal leaders to emerge (Ronda 1998:93). To Lewis and Clark, intertribal war had to cease in order for trade to flourish and for American sovereignty to proceed unchallenged.

Even if trade could have been discussed in terms of future relationships, the word "trade" itself had different connotations. To Lewis and Clark, "trade" meant pelts. They observed, for example, that "the Arikaras could not supply beaver pelts, [thus] the market for goods to replace those of English manufacture was great" (Ronda 1998:55). To the Shoshone, however, trade meant firearms. Promoting intertribal peace, trade with American merchants, and eventual unification under American sovereignty were the cornerstones of Lewis and Clark's diplomacy. On the other hand, as they ventured deeper into the continent, they acquired perceptions – not always completely accurate – of intertribal relationships: "the captains perceived the Tetons as ferocious enemies to undercut, the Arikaras as unwilling dupes of the rapacious Sioux, and the Mandans and Hidatsas as a force of unknown dimension. With a naïve optimism typical of so much Euro-American frontier diplomacy, Lewis and Clark believed they could easily reshape Upper Missouri realities to their expectations" (Ronda 1998:55). In addition, they often missed the multiple leadership positions that had served tribes well for centuries; acknowledging one leader caused another to be snubbed. The Captains sometimes misinterpreted serious breaches of protocol as petty inter-band "gellousy" (Ronda 1998:56). Nor did the Corps realize the status of women in some tribes. Watkuweis, an elderly Nez Perce woman who had been captured by the Blackfeet, purchased by a trader in Canada, and treated well by whites, was responsible for the warm reception Clark received in the camp of Twisted Hair near the Clearwater River. "Clark did not know how important the old woman had been in insuring a friendly reception for the expedition . . . 'These are the people who helped me. Do them no hurt'," she told the tribe. Clark mentioned her in his journal, but later edited her name from

the entry” (Ronda 1998:159). Native languages became the canary in the coal mine: the Corps’ reluctance to acknowledge their value was a precursor to the American nation’s resistance to tribal sovereignty in a larger sense.

### The Thousand-Year Language

For centuries before the appearance of white traders and explorers, sign language between tribes had developed into “the most easily understood language”, what naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton called logical, established, and free of reliance on facial expressions, sound, or any equipment other than the hands. While over 350 tribal languages had evolved in North America, Seton observed that the language of sign was “essentially the same from Saskatchewan to the Rio Grande” (Hunt 2006:14). The sign language of the Plains had had centuries to develop into a viable, flexible, and precise method of communicating and negotiating alliances between tribes – or at least of understand the exact nature of disagreements, such as stolen horses and captives. So, although the Captains may not have considered sign language sophisticated enough to use for communication while on their mission, they realized they would need an employee who understood it. The first interpreter hired was George Drouillard, experienced in backwoods survival, “tracker, adept at sign language” and the “expedition’s chief hunter and scout” (Ronda 1998:15).

Lewis noted that “Drewyer” (Drouillard) was valuable for his ability to converse in the seemingly “universal” language used between tribes and recognized that it was “imperfect and liable to error but is much less so than would be expected[.] the strong parts of the ideas are seldom mistaken” (Hunt 2006:12). Yet the expedition journals explicitly refer to sign language fewer than a dozen times, and editor Nicholas Biddle addressed this “curious silence” in 1810 when he pressed Clark for details about sign language used on the expedition. Clark evaded the question by referring Biddle to co-editor George Shannon

(Hunt 2006:13). Lewis and Clark had been explicitly instructed to record languages in a scholarly tradition, not to explain how language was circumvented by sign language.

Admittedly, sign language had limitations – especially in the dark, or when users were far from one another. Gass, unconvinced of the versatility and fluency of sign language, complained that signs were “imperfect” and a poor replacement for verbal communication (Hunt 2006:15). Clearly, Lewis and Clark had a strong, perhaps justifiable bias towards written language – everyone in the Corps was to keep a journal.

#### Translation Chains, Mistrusted Links

The Corps’ diplomatic mission wound up in the rough hands of translators who could not be considered diplomats. In June 1804, the crew met Pierre Cruzatte, an experienced river pilot who spoke Omaha and French due to his parentage as well as English and a few phrases of Lakota. Pierre Dorion, a twenty-year neighbor of the Yankton Sioux, “was just the sort of agent Lewis and Clark needed to interpret at crucial conferences and to organize important delegations. Dorion was promptly hired with the understanding that he would remain with the Yanktons to promote the expedition’s Indian policy” (Ronda 1998:16). Dorion seems to have created the appearance of smooth relations with the Teton Sioux somewhat too well. “Lewis and Clark were so confident of continued success in dealing with the Sioux that they did not think twice about leaving behind the only skilled interpreter” when they advanced up the Missouri (Ronda 1998:26). Within a few days, Lewis and Clark had become embroiled in a heated altercation with the Bad River Sioux that could easily have become lethal. “We feel much at a loss for want of an interpreter” Clark mourned, noting that Cruzatte was essentially worthless as a translator because of his limited signing vocabulary (Ronda 1998:31).

Lewis gave a short speech, unintelligible to the tribe except for a threatening display of martial power, gifts to only one tribal chief, thus slighting the others, increasingly heated conversation “passed through a very inadequate interpreter” (Cruzatte) and ending on Clark’s boast that the Americans could kill twenty nations in a day – not a high point in diplomatic relations (Ronda 1998:33). Black Buffalo responded to the American intimidation with a display of scalps and other trophies of Native military potency, probably to discourage them from trading with the upper Missouri peoples, including the Arikaras (Ronda 1998:36).

Meanwhile, Cruzatte redeemed himself somewhat by fraternizing with some Omaha captives who disclosed that the Lakota Sioux planned to put a stop to the expedition, regardless of the courtesies displayed (Fifer 2009:22). This information allowed the captains to increase their vigilance, to be able to, in the words of Lewis, “Shew as little Signs of a Knowledge of their intentions as possible”, and to keep an all-night watch on their keelboat, preventing any advantage-taking on the part of the Sioux (2009:22).

French traders Pierre-Antoine Tabeau and Joseph Gravelines, both conversant in Arikara and Sioux and knowledgeable about Arikara-Sioux alliances, joined the Corps and conveyed the strong likelihood that they would be amenable to trade with Americans (Ronda 1998:54). Without explicit direction from Jefferson in this uncharted territory, the captains had to use their own judgment and be even more reliant on interpreters. When Gravelines went with tobacco to a get-acquainted session and returned with the news that the Arikaras were welcoming, Lewis and Clark were encouraged, believing that the door was open to their purposes. However, numerous factors had recently torn apart traditional Arikara life. The first wave of smallpox had killed 75 percent of the population, and successive waves had further decimated their numbers. Political tensions ran high because the remaining Arikara had consolidated their numbers into a single village, causing disputes between traditional leaders, themselves in uncharted social territory. Although Lewis described (with

Gravelines interpreting) the advantages of trade with St. Louis merchants – vermilion, pewter, needles, beads, cloth, combs, razors, rolls of wire, scissors, knives, and tomahawks), the Arikara remained aloof from forming an alliance (Ronda 1998:56).

Next to join the Corps, René Jusseaume had lived with the Mandans for fifteen years and was fluent in their language. Lewis and Clark relied upon Jusseaume's knowledge of political relationships and different chiefs to insure complete representation of all factions in hopes of forging a solid agreement and articulating the three-part theme of "United States sovereignty, American trade, and intertribal peace" (Ronda 1998:83). An interesting rumor recorded in a crew member's journal regarding "geallousy" [sic] between Drouillard and "Gisom" [sic] (Jusseaume) revealed yet another tension involved in translation (Hunt 2006:16) and may hint at a certain competitiveness in interpretation, producing accuracy and precision, or it may have produced more of what the captains wanted to hear. In those situations when interpreters were not available, the crew was limited to giving gifts; when interpreters were involved, the crew had to trust that they were providing accurate representations of the information given. The expedition's relationship with the Hidatsa, allies of the Mandans, became very important, both in terms of gathering vocabulary on the documentation sheets as well as "the size and locations of the Crow, Flathead, Shoshoni, and Blue Mud (Nez Perce) Indians. Without Hidatsa cooperation, however grudgingly given, there would have been substantial gaps in the expedition's ethnography" (Ronda 1998:116).

### The Interpreter's Delicate Balance

Linguist Frances Karttunen notes that history's interpreters frequently lived in tenuous and fearful circumstances, and were sometimes "dragged into the role. Incompetent and wholly unwilling interpreters didn't last long . . . The famous ones are the individuals who had some aptitude for living in two worlds and who survived to tell about it" (1994:xi-xii).

And although sign language could be eloquent among Natives, white explorers considered it a “crude pantomime” that frustrated their efforts to communicate political nuances. In no other type of interaction – short of contentious peace talks – is the potential for explosive misunderstanding as present on a moment-to-moment basis as it is with interpretation.

Karttunen notes that “however much an investigator might believe he has chosen his interpreter, circumstances long prior to the investigator’s arrival put that particular individual in place to take the job” (1996:32). A high number of females are known as interpreters for invading forces – Doña Marina (La Malinche), Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, and the “indefatigable, resourceful, and personable Sacagawea” who won the admiration of the Corps of Discovery (Porter 2004:373). However, it is not gender but marginalization seems to be the force behind the development of interpreters. Because women are often economically marginalized and “relegated to the edge of their communities . . . women too young for childbearing, childless women, and women whose children are grown” are frequently those on the fringes, balanced between the threat of starvation and half-belonging to a grudging community. Thus they must develop strategies and talents useful to strangers entering the community: invaders, explorers, military encroachers. Once they have interacted with the strangers, interpreters may be permanently estranged from the mainstream and seal their fates permanently as citizens without a country. Karttunen lauds them as “supremely talented individuals who were able to grasp unprecedented contact situations and make sense of them for both sides” (1994:200).

Long before Lewis and Clark ventured up the Missouri, events had been put in motion that would help open the West. In about 1799, a ten-year-old Shoshone girl, presumably the daughter of a chief, was kidnapped and raised by the Hidatsa. Sold to French trader Toussaint Charbonneau a few years later, she was pregnant with her first child when Lewis and Clark met the couple and quickly discerned their combined value as

translators and guides. The subject of hundreds of books, chapters, and articles, Sacagawea has also passed into legend: although it is believed that she died in 1812, there is another story that she lived with the Wind River Shoshone until the ripe old age of 96. Most likely she saved the lives of many members of the Corps due to her knowledge of the terrain, winter survival techniques, and the linguistic advantage she provided. Her very presence lent credibility to the Corps' mission of peace, and Clark noted in his journal that "a woman with a party of men is a token of peace." Yet even the talented Sacagawea could not smooth out all interactions:

In all these talks the central problem remained language translation. . . . each word had to pass along a cumbersome translation chain stretching from a [Native] speaker through Sacagawea, Charbonneau, Jusseaume, and on to members of the expedition. Heated arguments among the various translators were frequent, slowing the whole process and worrying many Indians [who] could not well comprehend the intention of recording their words. (Ronda 1998:116)

Less cumbersome were contacts with traders living around Fort Mandan, who freely shared information and friendly observations during the winter of 1804-05. Both personal observation and "political ethnography" added to the Corps' collected lore of the areas that lay ahead of them, but Sacagawea's known communication skills – and possibly her unrecognized diplomacy – increased positive connections at the Fort.

Inevitably, mistakes were made. In one instance, Lewis apparently had asked Drouillard for a suitable sign to convey peaceful intent if he met any Natives, and he had asked either Sacagawea or Charbonneau for the word for "white man." So in mid-August 1805, when Lewis chanced upon a Shoshoni man on horseback and began waving his blanket and shouting the equivalent of "Stranger! Stranger!" the Shoshoni rode off, presumably to warn his tribe about sighting a self-confessed white stranger who seemed mentally unbalanced. "The Indian kinship world was divided between relatives who were

friends and strangers who were potential enemies. Shouting 'tab-ba-bone' to an already fearful Shoshoni was hardly the way to begin a successful talk" (Ronda 1998:140).

Eventually, Lewis received a fairly warm welcome at the Shoshoni fires, exchanging vermilion and beads and enjoying a meal which consisted of salmon, which misled him into thinking they were close to the Pacific. "The ceremony complete, Lewis spoke through Drouillard's signs to explain who they were, what their mission was, and what they hoped to obtain from the Shoshonis" (Ronda 1998:143). Much to the surprise of both Shoshoni and Americans, Sacagawea realized that these were her family. The Shoshonis' natural suspicion of the well-armed white party, the visible bond and another translation chain with Sacagawea, and the reality that he could not rely on Spanish sources for goods convinced her brother Cameahwait that "he could hardly reject the opportunity to have a place in the new American trade systems. Guns and ammunition, especially, were on the chief's mind" (1998:147). Named Camp Fortunate because of these various instances of good luck, the site gave Lewis a chance to make careful observations and record numerous details about Shoshoni life, asking Sacagawea to fill in the details.

#### Linguistic Doorways and Barriers

As the Corps came into contact with the Nimipu, despite visual similarities with Salish speakers, "Clark's ears told him that the Nez Perce language was quite different from the Salish spoken by Flatheads. Without knowing it, the explorers had crossed an important linguistic boundary and were now in the territory of Sahaptian speakers. Clark recorded that these Indians called themselves 'Chop-unnish' . . . the Salish word used by Flatheads and their neighbors to describe the Nez Percés as 'those who lived to the south'" (Ronda 1998:158).



The language shift created yet another linguistic hurdle for the expedition. Lewis' journal entries on in August and September noted that, "when the explorers, led by the Shoshone guide Old Toby, encountered the Salish in the Bitterroot Valley of Montana: our guide could not speake the language of these people but soon engaged them in conversation by signs or jesticulation, the common language of all the Aborigines of North America, it is one understood by all of them and appears to be sufficiently copious to convey with a degree of certainty the outlines of what they wish to communicate" (Hunt 2006:17). In other words, sign language once again became the Esperanto of the plains. Ironically, Lewis revealed his confidence in sign language while possibly exaggerating its universality and raising the question why he never seemed to have learned it.

So, although Old Toby, Sacagawea, and Charbonneau did not know Salish, luck again smiled on the expedition: "among the Flatheads was a Shoshoni boy who had been taken captive by some northern raiding party. . . Using the boy's language skills, the captains constructed a translation chain that required each word to pass through he captains' English, Labiche's French, Charbonneau's Hidatsa, Sacagawea's Shoshoni, and on to the boy's Salish" (Ronda 1998:156). Consuming most of a day, this translation chain resulted in the exchange of medals, friendly relations, and some horse-trading, which resulted in the exchange of tired horses for "Ellegant" ones due to the generosity of the Flathead.

Communication was difficult since neither old Toby nor Sacagawea could speak the Nimipu language. "Lewis and Clark were intent on obtaining accurate geographical information from the Nez Perces"; using sign, a prominent chief, Twisted Hair, took a whitened elk skin and drew an accurate map of the rivers that would take the expedition to the Columbia (Ronda 1998:161). Drouillard's signs were augmented with gifts of clothing, tobacco, flags, and medals. Twisted Hair, with a younger chief named Tetoharsky, promised

to serve as intermediaries between the explorers and the Sahaptian-speaking peoples. At the confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers, the two guides were invaluable when two hundred Wanapam men beating drums entered the Corps' camp. "American intentions were explained in signs to Twisted Hair and Tetoharsky, who then had to be relied upon to present a faithful summary to their fellow Sahaptian speakers. Lewis and Clark wanted the Wanapams and Yakimas to know 'our friendly disposition to all nations, and our joy in Seeing those of our friendly Children around us'" (Ronda 1998:165).

At The Dalles of the Columbia, the Corps realized yet another linguistic and economic empire – this one based on dried salmon and trade jargon of the Wisram and Wasco, where Sahaptian speakers negotiated trade items like buffalo robes and European goods with Chinookan people, and where information was exchanged and taken to the far reaches of each tribe's sovereignty. Into this long-established system ventured the Corps, intending to disrupt – peacefully – "the needs not only of The Dalles middlemen but also their more distant Chinookan and Sahaptian trading partners" (Ronda 1998:169). Yet the Corps' sense of order was disrupted by what they viewed as "thefts" by river Indians – which the Indians themselves viewed as a just method of creating "mutually rewarding reciprocal relationships" (Ronda 1998:172).

The social distance created by the predominantly business connections and a certain aloofness on the part of the residents, a dearth of Native informants, the dwindling supply of trade goods, and the remote location of Fort Clatsop at the mouth of Columbia isolated the Corps. Additionally, and perhaps most important, the lack of interpreters to explain cultural interactions made this last westward leg of the expedition perhaps the least productive in terms of the Corps' three-part mission.

Perhaps since the trade jargon was an incredibly productive, organic language used by numerous groups along the Pacific Coast, it was much more difficult to make linguistic

connections through sign language used in the interior, or in areas where a distinct Native language had been used. Ironically, the all-inclusiveness and adaptability of Chinook Jargon for Native people created a wall that prevented Corps access.

Lewis and Clark never developed the sort of rapport they had had with [the Mandan]. Some of that difficulty was a matter of language. However difficult and time-consuming the translations at Fort Mandan, at least the words and sentences had been forthcoming. At Fort Clatsop, translation was much more difficult. No one in the party could speak the Chinookan language, and the explorers evidently picked up only a rudimentary knowledge of the trade jargon. Over and over, Lewis lamented: "I cannot understand them sufficiently to make any enquiries." (Ronda 1998:207)

United by the stress of a Plains winter at Fort Mandan, Native people, traders, and explorers had been allies in the struggle to survive. But the relative abundance and more temperate climate along the Columbia made life at Fort Clatsop an "armed truce" before the Corps began its eastward return in March 1806. Just as their early reliance on interpreters had given Lewis and Clark a key to culture, the absence of interpreters – those marginalized individuals with a foot in two worlds – prevented them from having quite the success they had hoped for.

### III. Mullan, Sohon, and Regard for Native Languages

In the 1850s, as the United States emerged from decades of negotiating its external boundaries with Mexico, England, France, and Russia, American leaders who cultivated an expanded national consciousness emerged as well. The national vision of transcontinental railroads "to connect the growing settlements of the Pacific slope with the eastern states" motivated Congress in 1852 to authorize the War Department to build "the most practicable and economic route from the Mississippi to the Pacific" (Ewers 1948:2). The first governor of Washington Territory, Isaac Ingalls Stevens, was put in charge of the survey from the Missouri to the Columbia, one of several railroad surveys going on at the same time. While

the planned railroad and the pressures of emigrating settlers were the primary reasons for the conception of the desired “route”, it was the northern road’s military potential that accelerated construction (Fromm 2004; Mineral County Historical Society 2006).

In June 1853, a twenty-three-year old West Point graduate named John Mullan volunteered to work for the survey and set out from St. Paul for the Yellowstone and Musselshell Rivers. Later that year, he traveled with members of the Flathead tribe from the Missouri to the Bitterroot Valley south of present-day Missoula and forged his first friendships with them. Between the autumn of 1853 and late 1854, Mullan explored over three thousand miles of potential routes for the railroad, including the Lolo Pass trail followed by Lewis and Clark and north to the lands of the Pend d’Oreille and Coeur d’Alene. In 1855, Mullan traveled from Puget Sound west with orders to begin the road on a budget of thirty thousand dollars – far from enough to hire men and buy equipment. The road project lost momentum, and Mullan was dispatched to Florida to fight in the Seminole Wars. By 1857, however, two main factors generated increased interest and funding for the wagon road: steamboats were able to travel up the Missouri from St. Louis to Fort Benton, bringing emigrants into Washington Territory, and certain tribes were increasingly unhappy with the numbers of white settlers coming into their regions. Isaac Stevens had hashed out the 1855 Hellgate treaty with the Flathead, Kootenay, and Upper Pend d’Oreille tribes (Treaty of Hellgate 1858:n.p.), but others felt excluded from the process. Growing distrust contributed to flashpoints in Washington Territory such as the altercations at Steptoe Butte, where the Army was defeated in May 1858, and retaliatory battles at Spokane Plains and Four Lakes in early September 1858, where a combined force of Army soldiers and Nez Perce scouts struck back at Coeur d’Alene, Spokane, and Palouse. These flashpoints were west of the Bitterroots and presented an opportunity for Stevens. Armed with funds and the promise of more, Stevens hired Lieutenant Mullan to supervise a small crew that would spend the

winter of 1858 in the Bitterroot and along the present-day Clark Fork River (Fromm 2004). To Stevens' surprise, the Mullan crew worked vigorously through the winter, surveying the region with modern instruments and cultivating friendships with local tribal guides. In June 1859, road construction began near Fort Walla Walla, Washington Territory, which had been built only four years earlier near a site traditionally used as a gathering place for war councils, potlatches, Sun Dance celebrations, sports, and tribal trade, an implicit statement that the region was under new management. Beginning construction at the fort allowed the road to take advantage of "the meanderings of one of the old and well-traveled Indian trails through the Inland Empire" (Elliott 1923:227). What resulted was a landmark achievement in construction, transportation, technology, public relations and, surprisingly, language preservation and an implicit acknowledgement of tribal language sovereignty.

As demonstrated by his 1863 *Report on Construction of a Military Road from Fort Walla-Walla to Fort Benton*, Mullan was devoted to technical computations made possible by the technology he employed in geographical navigation and road construction: sextants to determine astronomical positions, odometers to measure distances, barometers to measure altitudes, and spirit levels to determine precise altitudes and profiles for comparing and contrasting alternative routes (Mullan 1863). Positioned by history between the legendary Lewis and Clark and the future railroad, Mullan had a compelling awareness of the need to leave accurate records.

Isaac Stevens described Mullan as "an indefatigable worker, a conscientious zealot and an inspiring enthusiast . . . [his communication] shows the earnestness of the man and reveals the sincerity of his purpose" (Stone 1933:n.p.). What is noted less frequently about John Mullan is his exceptional skill as a communicator, diplomat, and manager of his crew's interactions with Native people. The narrative sections of the *Report on Construction* are eminently readable, even to twenty-first century readers, while his technical writing – in

Mullan's day, a discipline as rare as the technology that made it necessary – is precise, unambiguous, and attentive to a Congressional audience that might not understand complicated mathematical concepts and their applications. Besides their mastery of gadgetry, the Mullan crew was likely responsible for the first extensive use of accurate topographical lines showing variations in elevation (McDermott and Grim 2002).

In addition to technical and persuasive writing, Mullan also demonstrated rhetorical diplomacy regarding the inadequate, often distorted maps that were available to his crew and inevitably increased his crew's dependence on information gleaned from Native sources. He no doubt realized that his report had to impress the Secretary of War and Congress as to the degree of new knowledge his team was forced to generate, while not appearing to denigrate the iconic contribution of Lewis and Clark. To broach the issue, he stated simply, "The first party, under Lewis and Clark, sent out by the government to map this region, failed to report any longitudinal observations." He then quoted a kindly notation by Thomas Jefferson regarding Meriwether Lewis: "No man within the range of my acquaintance united so many qualifications necessary for [the party's] successful direction; but he had not received such an astronomical education as might enable him to give us the geography of the country with the precision desired" (U.S. Secretary of War 1862:175). This same gentle and inevitable criticism has been applied to decades of map-making, up to and including our own: at the moment that three dimensions are transformed into two, the most notable characteristics of any map are the many ways in which it is limited.

Beleaguered by "vague and erroneous outline of the Rocky Mountains" (U.S. Secretary of War 1862:3) and ambiguous reference points such as "Mountains with Fir Pine & Cedar", Mullan would have been at a disadvantage without access to Indigenous knowledge. In addition to notations from the Lewis and Clark Expedition fifty years earlier, Mullan had access to a confusing array of topographical information, almost

none of it prepared with the benefit of mathematics. Maps made by Mullan's predecessors attest to an absence of useful or frequented trails prior to the 1859 road-building expedition. A "Map of the Northwest Fur country" created in 1836 by trader and trapper Warren Angus Ferris labels "Mountains" and "Spurrs" and acknowledges rivers and lakes but with considerable distortion, and each mapmaker used his own unique nomenclature for landmarks. Ferris attempted to record detail by noting "Old House" and routes for portage, in addition to dotted areas designating "Hell Gates" (presumably present-day Missoula), but missing from the details are trails. A map drawn in 1841 by Father De Smet showed waterways but no terrain symbols (e.g., mountain passes), reflective of how missionaries used the interconnecting waterways near Lake Coeur d'Alene. A USGS report concedes that "his major concern was hydrography" (U.S. Geological Survey 2005), not westward expansion. These fragments of information further suggest how enormous was the void of geographical knowledge, despite efforts from the highest levels of local government. Mullan and his crew would be walking into these voids with minimal mapped knowledge and increased dependency on interaction with tribes. Thus the Mullan expedition would become one of the first efforts to show deference to Indigenous language as a means of navigating the terrain where it was used.

In addition to overcoming or coping with technical problems, Mullan was also a superior manager of human resources, selecting energetic, talented crew members for delicate negotiations. Among them were Thomas Adams, a topographer who collaborated with Ignace (who was either Flathead or an Iroquois living with the Flathead and who earned the name "Aeneas" from Mullan) to locate the mountain pass that would be eventually used by the Northern Pacific. Walter W. Johnson was entrusted with what today would be called lobbying in Washington DC to keep the Mullan Road at the forefront of the government's consciousness during events that were heading towards the Civil War. But perhaps Mullan's

best hiring decision was Gustavus Sohon, a young Prussian who had left Europe – ironically, to escape military service – to follow a sister to America, where he quickly learned English and the advantages of joining the U.S. Army. A capable topographer and mapmaker and fluent in German, French, and Italian, Sohon also produced hundreds of portraits and landscapes that have captured important cultural information gathered during road construction.

With his European consciousness of language diversity every hundred miles or so, Sohon seemed to find it natural to learn and document the languages of the Nez Perce, the Blackfoot, and Salish as spoken by both the Flathead and Pend d'Oreille tribes. Serving as Mullan's interpreter, Sohon "aided him in gathering information on the trails, mountain passes, and general geography of the region. His graphic drawings of Indians and locales are among the most valuable depictions in existence" (Coleman and Reimer 1968:9). An effort in 2005 to restore the name "Sohon Pass" to St. Regis Pass to correct a mapmaker's mistake described Sohon as follows:

[A] man who played a very significant role in the exploration, mapping and settlement of the Northern Rockies. He was a friend of the Nez Perce, Flathead and Blackfeet people. His work with these peoples led to the creation of two substantial linguistic dictionaries by which these peoples can reconstruct their languages as they were spoken in the mid-nineteenth century . . . [and] over 90 portraitures of key [Native] officials." (U.S. Geological Survey, Domestic Geography Name Report)

Sohon's artwork and two dictionaries become more valuable in terms of language preservation with each passing decade. The 184-page *English, Flathead, Blackfoot and Nez Perce Comparative Dictionary* and 22 pages of a *Partial English-Flathead Dictionary*, "A" through "Game" present compelling evidence as to the nature of interactions between the resident Natives and the Mullan crew. The *Comparative Dictionary* consists of a column each for English, Flathead, Blackfoot, and Nez Perce words, alphabetized and annotated in Sohon's precise handwriting. Sohon documented over 1,750 Salish terms, over 400 in



Blackfoot, and about a hundred Nez Perce. The scope of the collection includes words for animals, colors, relationships, clothing, kinship terms, and plants; verbs, prepositions, modifiers, and conditional expressions. Clearly it is the work of many hours of conversation, collaboration, and elicitation, drawing the most appropriate word for a concept from the mind of a Native speaker, pressing for specifics, and making important distinctions. Also notable is Sohon's documentation of numerous variations of related terms. For example, he captured four Salish words for "boy": infant (*ochtadlt skihaltémish*), toddler (*s-chkw-ku-sa-a*), ten-year-old (*titto-taje*), and fifteen-year-old (*tit-tu-eit*) (Sohon 1860:18).

Sohon's facility with language not only made possible Mullan's detailed understanding of the geography of what is now Idaho and western Montana but also cemented good relationships with the Flathead. On the other hand, not even the affable linguist could establish bonds where resistance was high. As the Mullan Road wound northward into the region of the Spokane (Sohon's spelling) and Coeur d'Alene tribes, particularly near the Coeur d'Alene Mission, what had been a benign interest on the part of tribes seems to have turned into aggressive curiosity and a hostile awareness of the future impact of the road. Mullan justified sending Sohon into uncharted territory:

Mr. Sohon's easy connexion [sic] with my explorations in 1853 and 1854, his knowledge of the Indian language, his familiarity with the general scope of country to be traversed, and the influence he had always so benevolently executed over the Indians, all pointed him out as the proper person to explore the next dangerous region. (Mullan 1863:11)

Entrusted with an important diplomatic and geographical mission, however, Sohon found himself "bitterly opposed by the Indians . . . and his life threatened by the Coeur d'Alene" (Mullan 1863:11). This resistance seems to be in part what prevented Mullan from carving out a more southerly route. Among the Coeur d'Alenes, skepticism as to the eventual success of the road was apparently even more pervasive than hostility. The crew was

warned that a couple of fools had attempted to cross the heavily forested region to the east but had never returned, and Augustine, a Coeur d'Alene guide, told Mullan that "If all the Americans spent a thousand years here, they could not make a road" (1863:57).

Mullan describes one interaction in what is now Idaho that seems characteristic of his method of interacting with tribal people, who

plied us with many questions as to our ultimate ends and objects . . . Discretion and prudence directed that our course towards them should be both frank and honest. I invited them to accompany me to my camp, gave them to eat and smoke, and afterwards explained to them in detail our mission and object; they left, apparently satisfied, and with a promise to preserve friendly relations in future. (1863:15)

Alert to situations that could cause conflict, delay construction, and compromise completion of the railroad, Mullan noted that "We allow no trading whatsoever with the Indians unless it be done with an interpreter, and have, in a word, taken every precaution to avoid either a difference or a conflict with them" (1863:18).

Even the more helpful Nez Perce were discouraging about the road's inevitable difficulties. Sohon's letter to Captain Mullan from Fort Walla Walla on July 7, 1859, recounted conversations with members of the tribe in an effort to get them to accompany him to Hell's Gate. "They reported to me that the whole region was one immense bed of rugged mountains and over which they never heard of any persons having traveled, and they declined to join my party" (Mullan 1863:95). Other discouraging comments represented "forests and underbrush as impenetrable" and cautioned Sohon not to go for political reasons. They told him "that if I did [take that route] I would perish, and rumor would say that the Indians had killed me" (1863:99). Eventually, however, Sohon persuaded thirty Nez Perce volunteers to join the crew.

As the Mullan crew moved east, however, overtly hostile encounters decreased. On September 4, 1859, Mullan wrote, "The Indians thus far are quiet, and I shall endeavor by a

just and prudent course to retain their friendship. They have quietly settled down regarding our road, and now instead of regarding it as a cause for dissatisfaction, rather look upon it as an especial advantage and make use of it instead of their Indian trails” (U. S. Secretary of War 1862:18). Perhaps the more difficult the terrain, the more welcome was the Mullan crew. Thus while some tribes resisted, others found the road immediately useful. At the eastern node of the trail at Fort Benton, immigrants began using the road long before it was officially completed in the spring of 1862.

#### Native Perspectives: “Sincere Regret”

Mullan seemed to have an uncanny sense of when to follow his own insights and the studied calculations of his educated crew and when to use the information of his Native guides. Appreciative of the friendship and loyalty consistently extended to him by the Flathead, Mullan did what he could to protect their interests. He stated openly that the Flatheads were “the best Indians in the mountains” and emphasized their friendliness. Knowing that the Flathead tribe had been promised the lands in the St. Marie’s Valley but had not yet received official confirmation from the U.S. government, he wrote to Congress that their friendliness “will always remain so *unless some great injustice is done them*” (U.S. Secretary of War 1862:48, emphasis added). After the enormous expenditure of money and effort to build the road, Mullan again employed his powers of diplomacy to note publicly that the maintenance of treaties and promises was the only way to ensure the continued free use of the road through territories occupied by traditional peoples speaking their traditional languages. Governor Stevens later wrote of Captain Mullan’s professionalism:

I received from him at every opportunity reports in regards to the Indian tribes, which were of the greatest service, and which enabled me better to comprehend their feelings. The fact that he left the [Bitterroot Valley] with the sincere regret of all the

Indians who knew or had heard of him is the best evidence of his services. (Coleman and Reimer 1968:9)

Sohon too enjoyed a long-lasting rapport with the tribes. Even after moving to San Francisco and Washington DC (where Mullan also resided for the last thirty years of his life), working as a photographer and supporting a large family, “he retained an active interest in the welfare of the tribes he had known so well. His daughter recalls that members of the Flathead Indian delegation to Washington under Chief Charlot in 1884 paid a visit to Mr. Sohon at his home. The only time she saw her father smoke was when the pipe was passed around at the beginning of that meeting of old friends” (Ewers 1948:23). Mullan and Sohon maintained their friendship for the rest of their lives. Eventually, Mullan did take a train ride near the area where he had envisioned “a line of Pullman sleepers [crossing] through Hell Gate canyon” (Stone 1933:n.p.). The Mullan crew, made up of brains and brawn, prudence and risk-taking, intuition and current scientific knowledge, in itself comprised a cultural model of technology, language preservation, and diplomacy never seen before in the West. The Mullan Road’s designation as a National Historic Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers in 1978 placed it in the same company as the Golden Gate Bridge and the Mason-Dixon Line in terms of significance to history and culture. Sohon’s dictionaries abide in the Smithsonian Institution, offering research opportunities for language preservationists and an insight into the formation of intercultural relationships forged through cooperation, collaboration, a sharpened pencil, and a good ear.

Sohon’s approach (and presumably Mullan’s, as well) was to accept linguistic variety and to acknowledge the value of tribal wisdom regarding landscape, climate, and custom. Had that approach aligned with the goals of the dominant paradigm, so too might have the idea of language sovereignty – that tribal speakers naturally have the need and right to speak their own language. Acceptance, however, was not to be the manner in which

settlement occurred in the West; instead, settlement would require that tribes acquiesced to a new identity as described by Euroamericans. Spack notes that “ways of using words [are] tied to the worldviews of particular social and cultural groups. Attaining new discourse practices is not a neutral undertaking, for it goes to the heart of one’s sense of self” (2002:110). The “new discourse practices” would be determined by speakers of English, who controlled the emerging educational system. In the absence of neutrality about language, language sovereignty would cease to exist in the United States before it could be articulated or recognized as a basic human right.

#### IV. “Not an Educational Institution”: Native American Boarding Schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

NOTE: The following section appears in Volume 5 of *International Advances in Education: Global Initiatives for Equity and Social Justice* (Information Age Press, 2012).

*The United States has 250 Indian schools, with 26,000 pupils. In these schools the training goes no further than the seventh or eighth grades, for the Indian has not the mental aptitude of the white child with years of training. To speak English well and to read and write is really all he needs.*

*-- W. A. Jones, Commissioner of Indian Affairs  
The San Francisco Call, September 14, 1902*

Just as it is said that history is written by the victors, it can also be said that the victors define a nation’s educational system and who is successful in it. The basic purposes of “education” in white society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were far different from the methods of teaching in Native societies. While both systems were invested in the idea that education was necessary to the well-being of their future generations, they approached the education of young people in very different ways. The dominance of white society allowed white values and methods to become the foundation for determining

classroom language. Deprived of traditional connections and judged incapable of competence due to their race, Native children were at the crux of an ideological conflict as the United States moved into the twentieth century. Lomowaima, head of American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona, notes that: “this exercise of power was mediated as well as cloaked by the language of morality, which also cloaked the basic dispossession of people from their tribal identities and lands” (Lomowaima 1993:236). Education was less about intellectual advancement than methods of persuasion used to force Native people to multiple methods of surrender.

This section provides an overview of the collision between Native societies, which did not necessarily differentiate “education” from other aspects of life, and the highly structured Euroamerican educational system ostensibly linked to morality, patriotism, citizenship, and economic progress – at the expense of Native life. The boarding-school era separated generations of children from their heritage yet repeatedly imparted to them their unworthiness for full status as citizens. When after almost a century the assimilation model proved unworkable, opportunities provided by civil rights legislation offered the promise of cultural autonomy to Native communities. While there are strong indicators of very positive directions in Native language education in the US during the last few decades, there is also a great deal of damage to overcome.

### Approaches to Education

In early America, receiving an education was linked to being a good citizen – hard-working, literate, and patriotic, able to become a productive American in an era desirous of expansion, extraction, and exponential growth. The idea of “norming” or establishing standard levels in basic reading, writing, and math skills was part of a democratic ethos that caused differences – such as former nationality, ethnicity, or language – to be swept away,

or at least swept out of sight. Learning new content was only one small part of education. Deportment, self-containment, and morality were instrumental elements in the march towards progress. What better way to demonstrate good citizenship than sitting in orderly rows in the school house, knowing one's place in the educational hierarchy, and aspiring to farming, ranching, or business, or – in the case of female children – to being stalwart domestic sub-partners.

In Native society, however, learning took place before a child's first steps, and teachers were parents, extended family, and community – “particularly the elders, whose wisdom and experience ensured the survival of the culture” (Knack 1978:225). This rigorous training was ever-present but “informal, generally based on story-telling, imitation, games, and instruction by kin and tribal specialists” (Coleman 1990:32). Martha Knack noted during an extensive study of the receptivity of Native parents to public school methods that:

observation, modeling, experience, and oral tradition [were] not acknowledged or validated – perhaps not even seen – by missionaries, entrepreneurs, and policymakers . . . The United States' Indian-education system that followed was built on the premise that Indian children were not being educated and needed exposure to the superior western culture. (Knack 1978:225)

To the untrained eye of missionaries and officials, Native children were not receiving any schooling. This perception justified actions that would later replace Native culture with the beliefs of white culture through various types of coercion. “Education for all” was a democratic, wholesome, and cherished ideal, but it meant white education, organized according to a northern European model intended to proliferate the continuance of white values. In fact, a secondary goal of the push for education was to drive Native culture, including Native languages, from the landscape.

The difference in paradigms – what Riner calls “the opposition between the Anglo Paradigm of Deliberate Instruction and the Indian Paradigm of Contingent Socialization” – suggests why formal education was an alien world for many Native children (Riner

1979:246). Exposed from infancy to learning through experience, imitation, and role-modeling, Native children were ill-equipped for the “drill and kill” of formal American schooling: uniforms, rows of desks, and countless rules of conduct. Schooling implicitly communicated that a child could not learn anything of value unless a white authority figure taught it to him or her – an “ongoing insult” to the Native child (Riner 1979:246). In addition, this explains why the white educational system dominated (or steamrolled) the prairies and why Native parents, wanting the best for their children, often acceded to the insistence of white administrators. The theme of superiority ran through more than a century and a half of instruction, both in curriculum and in the logistics of educating thousands of Native children.

By the early twentieth century, over twenty thousand young Indians were enrolled in government day schools, in on-reservation and off-reservation boarding schools, and in missionary schools. These schools, it was believed, would “civilize” and Christianize tribal children and thus accelerate the assimilation of all Indians into white society. Both secular and religious educators shared the conviction that Indian people were doomed to extinction unless they rejected their “savage” ways of life and adapted to the dominant, white culture. (Coleman 1990:31)

In the boarding school and missionary school era, fastidiousness and submissiveness were prized qualities in pupils, but even 30 years ago, “the primary objectives of instruction [were] cleanliness, punctuality, and conformity to safety and social regulations” (Riner 1979:245). Mainstream teachers still misinterpret cultural signals and misevaluate students, including modern-day Native students (Cleary and Peacock 1997). Mainstream teachers often construe shyness, silence, lack of competitiveness, and high absenteeism as signs of resistance to learning, unaware that an important cultural value in many Native families is to avoid competing in order to maintain order in the family and community and not to show off one’s own talents (Riner 1979; Knack 1978). How much more jarring it was in the boarding school era, where Native children raised to show respect for elders by lowered eyes “were trained to stand at attention with eyes straight ahead” (Grover 2003:229).



Admittedly, Victorian-era education was often remembered by white children as an extension of the “spare-the-rod-and-spoil-the-child” approach to child-raising. However, where pupils were encouraged to assert their knowledge and compete in early academic arenas, Native children reacted with “reserve and diffidence”, which administrators and teachers often interpreted as sullenness, resistance, or dishonesty. These misreadings perpetuated the justification for managing Indians and often thwarted them from exploiting treaty or trust benefits the government provided.

Another misperception was the “Ideology of Cultural Deprivation” assuming that all Indian students come from homes in disarray, have no desire to learn, and lack culture. Riner asserts that such an ideology “serves three functions: 1) it places the responsibility for scholastic defeat on the Indian home and the Indian child; 2) it justifies almost any activity or practice within the school as being somehow “educational”; and 3) it justifies educators in their isolation from and ignorance of the Indian community” (Riner 1979:245). His study two decades after the civil rights era discovered that, while 69 percent of teachers claimed to include Native studies materials in their classrooms, researchers found the materials to be promulgating either stereotypes or “complete confusion” (1979:245). In other words, Native experts were often not consulted about their own cultural practices before classrooms disseminated information about them. The curse of being unteachable has followed Native students from the beginnings of formal education and, in politically-correct guises, widened the gap between minority and mainstream education. A closer look at the boarding institutions demonstrates that the very means used to increase opportunities and status for most Americans was used to stifle expression and narrow prospects for Native people.

### A Brief History of Boarding Schools

The Christianization of Native people took precedence over any other social effort (not counting their subjugation through acts of war). As early as 1819, Congress passed the Indian Civilization Act to provide federal funds to establish “Indian schools” by Christian missionary societies (Grover 2003). Government-mandated compulsory education was seen as the means by which all children – especially Indian children – would be brought under the umbrella of progress to achieve the goals of civilization, to spare Native people from extinction, and to assimilate them fully. By 1870, the need for government-run Indian-only schools as part of the assimilation program was evident, and in 1879, the first off-reservation boarding school for Native children was established by Congress under the management of army officer Richard H. Pratt: the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Pratt had previously worked with Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Comanche prisoners in Florida, which foreshadowed how he would treat Indian children. Still, his background gave him a certain amount of credibility in the eyes of officials. Pratt (of “Kill the Indian, save the man” fame) stated, “I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked” (Grover 2003:224) – a disquieting image marking a Native child’s entrance into the white educational system. The goal was for generations of Indian people to gain economic independence by emulating white society and abandoning tribal dependence on natural resources.

Modeled after Virginia’s Hampton Institute, a post-slavery normal and industrial training school for young African-Americans and the alma mater of Booker T. Washington, Carlisle was run like a military school, including drills, company, rank, and the gray uniforms of the defeated South. Schools were built in Lawrence, Kansas, and Genoa, Nebraska, within the next five years. On the Oklahoma side of the Kansas border, the Chillico Indian Agricultural School began with an 1882 congressional order authorizing construction of a

school on eight thousand acres; it would operate until 1980 (Knack 1978:228). The Vermilion School, one of several mission schools that received federal money and operated as a federal contract school, was built in 1878 on Pike Bay close to a main highway south of Lake Vermilion, Minnesota. In 1890 the school was moved to a remote area on Sucker Point to “curb runaways, a recurrent problem at Indian boarding schools” (Grover 2003:226).

As part of the “immersion” Pratt envisioned, children would be sent to boarding schools to learn the English language and values of American culture as their memories of their own languages and cultures diminished. Separation from family was key. Linda LeGarde Grover, a descendent of Vermilion students from the Bois Forte band and director of Indian education for Duluth public schools, notes that: “even those who lived within walking distance could not go home until the end of the school year. This was part of the assimilation plan; even brief contact with family was considered detrimental” (Grover 2003, 229). Often the children themselves were excited to be heading off to school: “in nearly all cases the students agreed that they found it exciting and stimulating to meet so many young Indians from different tribes and locations” (Knack 1973:227).

Upon arrival at the school, children were “sanitized” – that is, bathed, sometimes by a staff member, violating their sense of modesty, and deloused, whether they had lice or not. Putting children in school uniforms allowed staff to throw away or store the clothing the children wore when they arrived, cutting them off from a tangible connection to their old ways of living. The buckskin, feathers, robes, moccasins and long hair of “savages” were surrendered to authorities (Knack 1973; Grover 2003; Riner 1979).

It was believed that independence for Native people would result from cultivating acreage following allotments to individual band members, authorized in treaties, the 1887 Dawes Act, and additional legislation; Native children had to learn to become farmers, or wheelwrights or blacksmiths to support farming. Farming was treated as an academic

subject, even though many children would be returning to conditions unsuitable for crop production. At the Vermilion Lake boarding school, for example, the children came from an area that was rocky in places, swampland in others, with a typically short northern growing season; yet assimilation demanded that students be taught to farm (Grover 2003:230). Thus, only the most basic subjects were taught, reading, writing, and arithmetic, with most efforts going to produce the superintendent's idea of "sober citizens" (Ahern 1997:293). As hundreds after hundreds of Native children were processed through the institutions, they were assessed in deprecating style, and found to have "handwriting and reading speeds [that] are not occupationally functional" (Knack 1973:227).

In 1892, Congress passed a mandatory attendance law for all students, since truancy would result in uneducated young people ill-equipped to assume their civic duties. Thomas J. Morgan, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1889 to 1893, made Indian education a primary concern and called for a national Indian educational system, something "all thoughtful well-wishers of the Indian" would approve. "I would not needlessly nor lightly interfere with the rights of Indian parents," Morgan wrote, "but I do not believe that Indians ... have any right to forcibly keep their children out of school to grow up like themselves" (Hoxie 1982:7). Like other well-intentioned reformers, Morgan believed in moral "uplift", or the correction of deficiencies in academic habits and character that would inevitably result from education. Once a child had been exposed to the cleanliness, order, and opportunity of school, he believed, camp life would hold little attraction.

In 1894, the US Senator from South Dakota, James Kyle, reported 76 missionary schools in 18 states; 156 boarding schools and 119 day schools showed total rosters of over 16,000 students. Kyle noted the keenness of Native children and college students "which would do credit to undergraduates of Yale or Harvard" and the fitness of "intelligent, self-sacrificing" sectarian teachers who were as skilled as those working in boarding schools. He

further noted that “The difference between the missionary teacher and the government employee is that the former is always imbued with the honest belief that an Indian can be both civilized and christianized [sic]” (Kyle 1894:84). While Kyle believed that “specially bright” pupils could advance to university courses and become teachers or other professionals, he believed that the majority of Native children should be prepared for jobs in agriculture or industrial trades, as those would be most needed on the reservations (Kyle 1894:84). In other words, Kyle and others did not anticipate that Native people would mingle freely in mainstream society. Kyle’s words exposed the evolution of the seemingly benevolent term “assimilation.” It was not intended for Native children to work side by side with whites but to farm allotted lands and quietly contribute to the national economy.

William Hailman, Morgan’s successor as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the early 1890s, wanted to expand Indian education through financial incentives to public schools: ten dollars per quarter for each child. In addition, Hailman seems to have had a sense that the school atmosphere would be important for retention: he charged schools with the responsibility for nurturing Native students as they did white children and explicitly advised vigilance in protecting Native children from “ridicule, insult, and other improper conduct at the hands of their fellow-pupils” (Hoxie 1982:9) to encourage them to attend regularly and do their school work. The national *Journal of Education* forecasted, “If every Indian child could be in school for five years, savagery would cease and the government support of Indians would be a thing of the past” (Hoxie 1982:9).

As Hailman’s tenure elided into that of Estelle Reel in 1898, a benign attitude toward the potential of Native children evolved into one of strict control. Reel stated categorically that the Native child was simply not suited for a range of intellectual or physical pursuits: “the very structure of his bones and muscles will not permit so wide a variety of manual movements as are customary among Caucasian children, and his very instincts and modes

of thought are adjusted to this imperfect manual development” (Lomowaima 1993:232). In the space of a few years, the idea that “Indians were severely deficient mentally and only able of labor or vocational training to serve” (Frissell 1898:4) pervaded educational philosophy. Hollis B. Frissell, the principal of Hampton Institute and a colleague of Reel, suggested that Indian educators could learn from the dealings with “the plantation negro” since “it is clear that slavery was a much better training school for life alongside of the white man than was the reservation” (Frissell 1898:4). Even posture did not escape Reel’s notice: she ruled that girls should “all sit in an erect position” and equal to other instructions, “Never permit sewing without a thimble” (Lomowaima 1993:223).

Reel further claimed that book knowledge and other forms of higher education were wasted on Native children. Emphasizing practical or vocational instruction, Reel advised schools to “teach only those things that apply directly to the student’s experience, and focus all learning on skills that will promote self-sufficiency” such as baking, basketry, harness-making, and other domestic pursuits for female students (Hoxie 1982:13). The intention was that a class of Native laborers would “free white men up for intellectual employment” (1982:10). White reformers at the (so-called) Indian Rights Association endorsed Reel’s pessimistic view of Indian abilities, stating that they were “feebler” and “more juvenile” than whites and supporting her labor-oriented approach to Indian education (Lomowaima 1993:231). Even at the boarding schools themselves, justified by the philosophy that Native children were suitable only for serving others, administrators oversaw students spending half of each day on vocational duties, “sewing hundreds of shirts, darning thousands of socks, polishing miles of corridor” (Lomowaima 1993:231). Acquiescing and cooperating with requirements only reinforced the perception of Native children as suited primarily for menial labor.

In 1902, shortly before his death, Morgan objected strenuously to the disintegration of a system that had shifted into the hands of people “who shared neither his view of education nor of civilization” (Hoxie 1982:9). The government had also discontinued integration of Indian children into public schools in the prior decade; integrated schools had decreased from 45 districts to 12 over a seven-year period (Hoxie 1982:9). Alleging “that the Indian Office had betrayed the cause of assimilation” (1982:5), Morgan reiterated the original goal that education of Native children would bring them into “fraternal and harmonious relationship with their white fellow-citizens” through a gradual progression through day schools to lay the foundations of civic culture, to boarding and grammar schools to learn trades and good habits, and provisions for those so inclined to attend high schools (1982:9). Without assimilation in the form of integration and maintenance of high expectations for their performance, Morgan predicted that Indian students would be severely disadvantaged economically. But Congress was happy to spend less on education, and educators and officials claimed that Morgan’s idea of Indian education was “frittering away the money in a human chase after a dream” (1982:12). At the 1904 World’s Fair, speakers declared that the Indian should understand “dignity in toil, and that the best thing he can do is to labor in the field” (1982:13).

Francis Leupp, appointed to the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs by Teddy Roosevelt in 1905, saw the Native as “an adult child” with the mentality of a fourteen-year-old white boy (Hoxie 1982:14). Leupp continued the emphasis on vocational and practical training. Realizing the implausibility of farming unfarmable land, Leupp declared that, if Natives didn’t want to farm, they could work as railroad laborers, lumbermen, miners, and ditchdiggers. Attaining jobs would not be a problem, because Indians were paid less, which made them competitive in marketing their skills. Apparently believing that boarding schools were somehow elitist and the cauldron of “false, undemocratic, and demoralizing ideas”

(1982:16), Leupp built 30 more day schools but with none of William Hailman's requirements that Native children should attend or that the schools should prevent abuse. The preference for vocationalization in day schools and on-reservation boarding schools was continued under his successors, Robert G. Valentine and Cato Sells, and finally the Carlisle school was closed in 1918.

As the system failed, Native children were blamed for their sheer lack of capacity. Parallel to the theory of scientific racism and contemporaneous with an expansionist foreign policy as the nineteenth century drew to a close, educators expected less and less of Native children. Segregated and with "their progress measured by shrinking standards of achievement" (Hoxie 1982:18), Native children were increasingly directed toward a path as laborers and domestics. By 1916, educators had surrendered ideas about "social homogeneity" and assimilation of Native children, except vocationally (1982:18).

Perhaps to affirm and document the success of the educational system, Sells required the following reports on each Native student about to graduate from a federal school: from fairly standard demographic information – name, age, sex, tribe, course and length of study – to the unreasonably intrusive – degree of Indian blood, physical condition, evidence of "industry," job qualifications, character, habits, competency, management of personal funds, and statement of property holdings (Lomowaima 1993:229). Graduation was not guaranteed. Teachers could only claim success if the student were considered self-sufficient. Graduation requirements included proper behavior; in other words, a student could fulfill all academic requirements and still not graduate because of an administrator's opinion of that elusive quality, "personal conduct":

In the end, the system failed twice: Indian people, determined to maintain family ties and cultural identity, did not assimilate, and the system created generations of poorly educated students who had learned to distrust it. The time and effort spent forcing Indians to learn the ways of the majority culture cut into time allotted to academics and vocational training. (Grover 2003:234)



Thus implementation was found to be far different from the promise of education for all. Once educated, Native students naturally believed themselves prepared by white benefactors for work, but employment was not a natural result of education. Ahern notes that "In Indian employment, as in education and land in severalty, reform enthusiasm waned and programs foundered when they threatened entrenched white interests" (Grover 1997:293).

At the dawn of the Indian New Deal, when reformer and advocate John Collier was appointed to the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs under Franklin D. Roosevelt, it was acknowledged that the Office of Indian Affairs had been sending subsidies to some public schools for forty years, yet on reservations, boarding schools were still responsible for the education of large numbers of Native children. Sent into the field to study the problem of Indian education, Lewis B. Meriam's survey team further acknowledged that the assimilation policy as applied to the education of Native children had failed.

Meriam's report stressed the need for education of children without removal from their homes and affirmed a new goal: "the primary task of Indian education was to provide children and parents with the skills to succeed as independent citizens in both Indian and white cultures" (Grover 2003:236). More changes came when the 1934 Johnson-O'Malley Act provided that public-school districts would receive federal money to educate Indian children, providing a substantial financial incentive for individual school districts to serve (and integrate) larger numbers of Indian students (Grover 2003:236).

Impoverished boarding schools made do, as they always had, but with some improvements. The Vermilion school hired a teacher in the 1930s who actually tried to learn Ojibwe from her students and their parents and took Indian Studies courses from the University of Minnesota. The shop teacher dedicated himself to helping students' families

with gardening projects. Despite the lack of running water and indoor plumbing, a hygiene campaign was introduced to keep children healthy (Grover 2003:237).

Following the adoption of the Indian New Deal policies, the removing of children from their homes was to a large extent reversed. Under the restrictions of the Depression and the reform-minded work of John Collier, "it was less expensive to have children attend day school than to send them off reservation to boarding schools [and] it was hoped that parents would learn from their children" (Kunitz 1971:220). In addition, it was hoped that tribal traditions would be reaffirmed, family relations solidified, children trained in technical skills, and day schools converted to community centers. By the 1930s, however, generations of Native people had been processed through the boarding schools, and had the scars to prove it.

The suppression of Native culture was perhaps inevitable in the boarding school structure. Any culture loss was destined to be on the side of Native people, families, language, and religion. "Policy makers calculated these practices to achieve far-reaching social goals, to civilize and Christianize young Indian people and so draw them away from tribal identification and communal living" (Lomowaima 1993:227). What was unexpected was the evolution of boarding schools into institutions that were only a small part education and mostly propaganda; in fact, the word 'school' became less and less applicable as time went on. Instead, boarding schools became indoctrination centers for training Native children to assume roles as productive, detribalized citizens despite the fact that they had been marginalized by just enough weak education to keep them powerless and with limited opportunities for employment.

The Chilocco Indian Agricultural School was not an educational institution created by or created to serve (in a productive sense) Indian people. Like other federal and mission boarding schools, it was created to destroy Indian tribal communities and erase individual Indian identities ... The seeming contradiction is no real paradox: federal boarding schools did not train Indian youth to assimilate into the American

“melting pot” but trained them to adopt the work discipline of the Protestant ethic and to accept their proper place in society as a marginal class. (Lomowaima 1993:236)

Clearly, religious practices contrary to Christianity were forbidden, and suppression of Native language was necessary for the ascendancy of English, as much for the education of the children as for administrators to maintain control. With an eye to the future, administrators employed every technique of control and dominance known to institutional life: surveillance, intimidation, control over the most basic details of daily life, preparation for servitude, and withholding rewards if obeisance were not demonstrated at every turn. It was believed that the construction of an outer reality would create an inner Christian:

The essential transformation would be internal, a matter of Christian belief, nontribal identification, mental discipline, and moral elevation. For female students, that meant training for domesticity; for male students, it meant instruction in semiskilled trades and agriculture. (Knack 1973:229)

Schools had usurped the traditional roles of parents and other family members in economic survival and religious instruction; they reduced Native student status to that of second- or third-class citizens. This was not what Native parents had in mind when encouraging or agreeing to send their children to school.

### Compliance of Native Parents

One of the mysteries of the boarding school era revolves around Native parents. Characterized unfairly as illiterate or negligent, Native parents were caught in a vice between loss of traditional ways and the pressure to prepare their children for an unknowable future. Aggressive recruiting policies were thus extremely persuasive. Because schools had to maintain a certain number of students to retain their federal funding, active recruiting efforts were somewhat ruthless, taking the form of friendly visits to tribal families. Often Native parents were persuaded that “the difficulties of their existence and the futility of

efforts to continue living the Indian way” could not compare to the “educational and life opportunities that school offered”, and a true success for a recruiter was to return to the school with the child (Grover 2003:226). Luther Standing Bear’s father “encouraged him to learn all he could in order to function in the changing world: ‘Someday I want to hear you speak like these Long Knife people, and work like them’” (Spack 2002:102).

It can be difficult for modern sensibilities to comprehend the pressure exerted on Native parents, who had experienced either directly or indirectly a complete shift from traditional life. One eastern senator noted on a visit to South Dakota that “With the exception of a few of the unprogressive, the Indians are very much interested in schools on and near the reserve, but they oppose sending their children to the eastern schools, on account of the climate” (Welsh 1893:9). Less clinical accounts by boarding school students recall mothers weeping as their children were boarded on buses: “All the mothers were crying,” remembers one activist (Bear 2008a:1). Believing their children would become educated, Native parents also realized their children would be the targets of racism in public schools; thus boarding schools appeared to be the best option. Lomowaima argues that recruiters

very specifically targeted Native nations that were the most recently hostile . . . There was a very conscious effort to recruit the children of leaders . . . essentially to hold those children hostage. The idea was it would be much easier to keep those communities pacified with their children held in a school somewhere far away. (Bear 2008a:1)

The parents of well-known figures such as Sioux reformer and physician Charles Eastman, Luther Standing Bear (whose birth name, “Plenty Kill”, was quickly changed by school officials), and Zitkala-Sa wanted their children to “walk the white road” and experience schooling as “an opportunity for glory” (Coleman 1990:32). As with any parent whose children are facing a completely different future than what they themselves had grown up with, Native parents often saw learning English and gaining schooling as tools

their children would need; “with emotions and motivations ranging from obedience to fear to curiosity to desires for white goods and an easier life” (1990:33), many parents acceded to white authorities. They could, however, not offer guidance to their children, who were caught up in a matrix of foreign influences: “the school as an institution, the curriculum, the school staff, other pupils, their tribal backgrounds, and their personal backgrounds” (1990:33). Each element of the new environment was constructed to distance children from their home communities.

From the beginning, however, some parents were distrustful of boarding schools, and their fears were justified. “Rheumatic diseases, pneumonia, meningitis, and tuberculosis . . . trachoma (a contagious eye infection that can cause blindness)” (Grover 2003:231) and numerous other communicable diseases were inevitable where large numbers of people clustered without benefit of rigorous hygiene. At the Vermilion school, measles, diphtheria, influenza, and accidents such as drownings and falls led to the creation of a cemetery of unmarked graves behind the school (2003:231). Typhoid and scarlet fever quarantines in 1914 prevented children from leaving the grounds and, despite persistent requests by superintendents, no hospital facility was provided as the government persisted in terminating Indian dependency. Children slept in double beds, increasing the spread of disease, raw sewage emptied into the lake, and lavatories were charitably deemed “horrible” (2003:231). The supposedly progressive state of institutionalized schooling could not assure education; it could not even assure survival.

#### A Double Blow to Native Girls

The transformation of the Native girl into an upstanding farm matron was paramount in the education agenda. “They would serve as the matrons of allotment households, promoting a Christian, civilized lifestyle and supporting their husbands in the difficult climb

up the cultural evolutionary staircase from hunter or pastoralist to farmer” (Lomowaima 1993:231).

Boarding school reality was especially harsh for Native girls, who not only were expected to conform to white society, but to Victorian ideals of young womanhood – restrictive even to the most privileged class. Pinafores, starched collars, stockings, bloomers, and black oxford shoes were the hallmarks of the “new woman” of the twentieth century, and Native girls were expected to dress uniformly (Knack 1978:229; Grover 2003; Riner 1979).

“A new image of the female Indian body was created according to the dictates of Victorian decency and domesticity” (Lomowaima 1993:228), as girls were given hairstyles similar to those of white girls, bobbed or twisted into identical styles. Thus clothed and bobbed, Native girls were expected to show the demeanor of well-behaved white girls. “This alteration in appearance was meant to be the first step in changing the entire American Indian population by way of its youngest, most impressionable, and most pliable members” (Grover 2003:229). The school asserted its place between the girl and her female relatives. School matrons kept track of the girls’ menstrual cycles and controlled the rags issued to them during their periods. “Indian schools had to convince or force Indian girls to renounce the teachings of their own mothers” (Lomowaima 1993:232).

Of particular importance, judging by the frequency with which they are discussed by female survivors of boarding school, were gray sateen bloomers, the ubiquitous undergarments assigned to all decent Victorian girls. At the boarding schools, they carried moral significance: bloomers were necessary “to avoid arousing the boys’ passions” – a concept more in the minds of white administrators than those of little girls (Lomowaima 1993:234). Yet bloomers became a common tool in forming a resistance strategy. Students report putting bloomers on over their “home clothes” when being watched by school staff but

removing them as soon as they were released on outside work detail. Girls would look out for one another's bloomers to prevent any girl being caught bloomerless and punished (1993:228).

Racial and gender stereotypes of the day were conflated around Native girls. Because "the cult of domesticity enshrined white women's fragility and invalidism" (Knack 1978:229), someone had to be fitted to do the dirty work of the household, sparing more delicate white hands in the process. Sylvanus Stall, later the author of books such as *What a Man of Forty-Five Ought to Know* (1901), believed in the elevation of white womanhood. He assured the National Congress of Mothers in 1893 that:

At war, at work, or at play, the white man is superior to the savage, and his culture has continually improved his condition. But with woman the rule is reversed. Her squaw sister will endure effort, exposure and hardship which would kill the white woman. (Lomowaima 1993:230)

W. A. Jones, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1898 to 1905, observed that "Instead of buying mangles and ironers for the girls, washtubs and scrub brushes should be given them, for the Indian girl needs training in home work" (Jones 1902:1). Attempting to head off the idea that the government owed Native young people anything more than the vocational training they would receive in the institutions, Jones declared that they should not aspire to work for the government in "positions for which they are not fitted as a class, save, perhaps, as helpers. No Indian was ever known to take the lead in anything" (1902:1). Thus domesticity as a career path became engrained in pedagogy, conveniently providing a means for the school buildings and grounds to be maintained. "Domesticity training for Indian girls was a clear surface manifestation of the gender- and race-defined fault lines segmenting American society at the turn of the century (and later as well)" (Lomowaima 1993:227).

Resistance was, of course, futile. Punishment through undesirable work detail, isolation, and beatings are widely reported. When children submitted to the beatings, it was because they “had been trained to accept physical punishment as a test of bravery” (Coleman 1990:34).

#### Salvation of a Different Sort

One bright spot in the institutionalized atmosphere of boarding schools occurred inadvertently. A significant number of Native staff members were hired, which Grover (2003) reports created camaraderie with the children, even those from other tribes. At the Vermilion boarding school, following the hiring of Native staff, “Attendance was good, and the problem of runaways appears to have been minor” (Grover 2003:227) Some Native staff members overlooked the use of Indian language in the dorms; thus, not only did the use of home language go unpunished, but it allowed the continuance of connections to family and culture. Some Native parents sent their children to Vermilion simply because Native staff would be available, which somewhat subverted the intent of the boarding schools (2003:228). Perhaps because Vermilion was fiscally marginal, requiring every able-bodied child and adult to maintain it through cheap labor, some of the more severe rules were overlooked. Spack reports that, even at Hampton Institute, the precursor to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, “In 1885 the rules . . . allowed students to use their own languages before breakfast and after supper during the week and all day on Sunday. . . . Instead, Hampton encouraged voluntary English speaking through a system of rewards” (2002:59), at least until the English-only policy of the Indian Office tightened the reins.

At first, graduates of Indian boarding schools were encouraged to return and serve as staff (Ahern 1997:263). In 1895, 88 percent of staff members were located near their home reservation; by 1907 that number had dropped to just over 50 percent, and “many had



left the Indian School Service rather than experience such a shift” (Ahern 1997:291). Native staff members noted increasing resistance to their suggestions and outright resentment from white staff. As the Office of Indian Affairs became less and less responsive to their requests, Native staff noted heightened disagreement especially regarding instances where tribal resources were misused or in cases of outright fraud. Since there were no laws to prevent job discrimination, Ahern notes that their protests resulted in “reduction in salary and title . . . or their replacement by white employees at a higher wage” (1997:290). With little clout and in an increasingly inhospitable work atmosphere by the turn of the century, Native staff often found themselves given unpleasant duties or fired. Often the reason given for their termination was “the temptation to speak in the tribal language or the inability to escape local factionalism” (1997:286).

The existence of Native staff created two developments that white administrators did not anticipate. The fact that they had completed boarding school – the very reason they were hired in the first place – gave them special status in the community, allowing them to serve as a bridge between the administration and Native students and parents. Having status, they attempted to use it, which inevitably challenged the authority of the superintendent. White staff may have grown suspicious of the power held by interpreters, the facility with which Native staff moved between two worlds; “the returned students spoke the language and had kin relationships that complicated the smooth running of the bureaucracy” (Ahern 1997:285). A strong sense of obligation to kin may have complicated working with students from rival families in some instances, but most difficulties seem to have been between Native and white staff. The ability of alumni to assert the desires of the community made them resistant to orders they did not understand or consider valid. Their advocacy for Native students threatened the hierarchy and strengthened the community – the exact opposite of what the boarding school system was intended to accomplish.

A notable reversal from the decades of denigration of Native culture took place due to the efforts of John Collier. Where boarding schools had reigned, Collier took the position that children were better off living with their parents and attending day schools, and Native communities would gain economic benefits in the long run. Collier noted in *Indians at Work* (1936) that “We have learned that removing the child from his environment . . . has failed utterly to lift the level of Indian existence” (Laukaitis 2006:101). Where Native culture had been the target of annihilation, Collier wanted to revive “religion, song, dance, and folklore” (Laukaitis 2006:102), and his progressive colleague Willard Walcott Beatty stated in September 1936:

An equally important contribution to the building up of Indian community and cultural life is the encouragement given by the Indian Office today to the perpetuation of native languages. The old prohibition against the speaking of native languages in our schools has been removed, with the result that both students and adults have shown an increased interest in the acquirement of English as a language in which they not only speak but in which they can actively think (Laukaitis 2006:102).

What is interesting about Beatty’s comment is that, while he lauded the removal of the “old prohibition”, it was clear that thinking in English remained the goal of civic life. The removal of punishments may have come a few decades too late to revive languages unused for a generation or more. Still, the general attitude endorsed the sovereign rights of Native people to use their traditional languages and engage in traditional cultural practices

#### Civil Rights Era and Corrective Action

In the late 1960s, a study conducted by the National Study on American Indian Education (NSAIE) produced data that was as disturbing as it was unsurprising: that “numerous instances of simplistic stereotyping in the curriculum materials treating Indians and . . . of Indian students” (Riner 1979:237) pervaded school communities – including Native students themselves. In other words, the communication of accurate cultural

information had broken down so badly that not even Native people could speak authoritatively about their own heritage.

Educators were found to use offhand labeling of students as *traditional* – which “implied a bad Indian who was dumb, lazy, unwashed and uncooperative” – or *acculturated*, meaning “a good Indian who was scrubbed, smart, a doer and above all compliant and cooperative” (Riner 1979:237). Ethical educators feared that these stereotypes foretold academic outcomes. As ethnic groups in the United States and elsewhere pursued the equality promised by civil rights legislation, the search for more careful distinctions, instead of stereotypes, resulted in the overdue revision of curricular materials. For example, one study acknowledged that – far from being homogenous groups as John Collier and other well-intentioned activists had characterized Native people – “several different paths of culture change are open to a traditional population, and that several of these options may be explored simultaneously” (1979:239). In contrast to an educational paradigm that allows choice and self-direction, negative or derogatory labeling by authority figures deters capable students from attempting educational goals such as completing high school.

In response to the alarming drop-out rate in one Native community – “two-thirds of the students who enter eighth grade will drop out before graduation” – one major study of Utah’s Southern Paiute tribe marked a breakthrough in understanding how education and culture might intersect and why “the few unusually successful students who do graduate are then unlikely to win the economic, social and political rewards supposedly promised by the high school diploma” (Riner 1979:248). After sorting families into general categories of *acculturated*, *isolated*, *bicultural*, and *traditional* based on factors such as family size, cultural practices, and father’s employment, researchers tracked attitudes towards public school education. Families in the acculturated and isolated groups emphasized “the learning of subsistence and marketable skills” (1979:242) to their children, whereas bicultural and

traditional families emphasized social skills. Additionally, the latter employed storytelling “as the single most powerful indicator of a positive orientation to traditional Indian culture” (1979:242). However, parents uniformly recounted examples of discrimination against their children and of social promotions, “moving Indian students up to the next grade regardless of their real comprehension of progress” – a claim that administrators denied (Knack 1978:221). Caught between the need to acculturate Native students while acknowledging special needs, administrators felt unfairly critiqued. They in turn laid the blame for lack of Native student accomplishment on home lives that did not emphasize the relevance of schooling to their future lives and thus encouraged dropping out.

Reminiscent of Native parents who struggled with the problem of education a hundred years earlier, twentieth-century Native parents voiced concerns that their children would cease to find value in Native customs and language and would essentially disconnect from their families. Yet others acknowledged two sides of the same coin: “that staying in the community did not guarantee that children would grow up knowledgeable in their Indian heritage. They pointed out that many of the young people who stayed home for schooling did not speak the language well or know the songs. They also noted that going away to school did not guarantee that the children would fail to speak Paiute fluently” (Knack 1978:225) and claimed that some of the most “traditional” leaders had spent years away at boarding schools and returned home to leadership positions in the tribe (1978:225).

In the 1970s, researchers began to recognize what had escaped early boarding school educators: that the concept of competition in white-majority schools presented problems for many students raised in Native homes (Knack 1978:216). Competition as a success strategy is in contradiction to those values of ethnic heritage required to fit into the student’s home community, such as sharing and cooperation (1978:231). Even with the

disruptions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, extended kin relationships still maintained community.

Another factor that explained a lack of enthusiasm for formal education was the absence of a positive correlation between years of schooling and job income. “These findings are in direct contradiction to the common stress on education in nearly all public programs to combat poverty, in both Indian and the general societies” (Knack 1978:229). In one southern Utah community, high school graduation was not a prerequisite for a significant majority of jobs available to Native men, including railroad workers whose wages had doubled in the last five years as the result of strikes on the East Coast in which they had taken no part (Knack 1978). Numerous Native communities are still surrounded by school systems whose goals do not fit their children’s needs. Just as in the days when Native children were taught agricultural subjects whether or not their land was arable, schools in the 1970s taught subjects “not relevant to later employment possibilities or useful in home situations” (1978:232). Enlightened educators urged the success of a school district to be measured in its ability to serve the specific needs of its community rather than against some abstract national standard.

Efforts to ease the “cultural discontinuity” when Native students transition from reservation schools to public high schools were identified as yet another factor in the success of Native students. In one study of Canadian Sioux students moving from a nurturing reservation school to a public high school, students coped by denying their ethnic heritage or rejecting the tribe’s traditional language and cultural signals (Wilson 1991:367). At the same time, public school teachers interviewed in one study claimed that Native students were not academically prepared to merge with the mainstream high school and that “they could not speak proper English, could not read, would not mix with other students,

and just did not fit into the system” (1991:374); apparently the ghost of Estelle Reel haunts high schools across the west.

Native students interviewed believed that teachers answered them curtly but gave elaborate answers to questions asked by white students. “In the space of one day they faced racism, behavior patterns different from their own, alien cultural norms, and economic stress. The structure appeared to them to have been designed for their failure, and they failed, practically overnight” (1991:377). Most frustrating to the students was the awareness that they had been very good students while in the reservation school but now felt “inadequate and unprepared to cope” (1991:378) and in some cases unchallenged by below-level course materials. Expectations of teachers and students created an atmosphere inhospitable to academic success. One Native student noted, “We get disqualified before we even know what the rules of the game are” (1991:378).

### Positive Directions

The unsatisfactory connections between Native students and mainstream classrooms, which caused despair to students and teachers alike, have in some ways contributed to increased tribal control over the education of their youth; tribal initiatives, rather than state rulings, are responsible for most improvements in education (Leap 1991:26). Native educators at the seven surviving boarding schools like the Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, California, teach traditional crafts like basket-weaving in addition to academic subjects, revitalizing cultural knowledge denied to the parents and grandparents of 21<sup>st</sup>-century students (Bear 2008b).

Language revitalization efforts, increasingly seen as a means to assert tribal sovereignty and shifting from the arena of academic linguists into tribal cultural centers, have increased culture and language exchanges between elders and youth. In some

extraordinary instances, tribal communities have partnered with public schools to increase facility in both the traditional language and English. A grant from the US Office of Bilingual Education allowed elementary school children of all races to participate in a “Two Paths” (*Wykoopah*) program funded under Title VII bilingual programs, facilitating the learning of both English and Northern Ute (Leap 1991:34). Administrators and parents seem most receptive to “Indian studies or Indian-language education that is framed in terms of academic benefits for all students” and maintain an academic focus (Ngai 2004:270).

Montana’s Salish language programs that bridge the reservation and public schools are part of an overall multicultural skills set that students will need in the future, whether they are White or Native, reservation or urban dwellers. Recognition that “the local can teach us about the global” decreases resistance and heightens the efficacy of inter-cultural education programs (Ngai 2004:334). The Klallam Language Program in Port Angeles, Washington, has received special recognition from UNESCO as exemplifying “successful collaboration among a local community, an academic linguist, and local authorities, particularly in the implementation of a language program in public schools” (UNESCO 2007:n.p.). From five remaining elders, the Klallam tribe has created curriculum and programs resulting in over 200 new speakers.

In recent years, great strides have been taken towards a genuine equality of education, the leveling of the playing field, and educational techniques that benefit not only Native students but those from a wide range of backgrounds, learning styles, and ages. At college level, federally-funded academic support centers and ethnic support groups such as RAIN (Retaining American Indian Students) provide islands of community for Native students.

When Montana educators realized that mainstream high school students knew more about changing borders in the former Soviet Union than they did about the twelve sovereign

tribal nations within the borders of their own state, “a landmark revision of the state’s constitution set in motion a reform effort that could change what the state’s graduating seniors know and understand . . . about the history and culture of the state’s American Indians” (Starnes 2006: 185-186). Montana State Law MCA 20-1-501, referred to as Indian Education for All (IEFA), affirms that teaching about Native American history and culture must be “transformed from a moral and ethical ideal into a standard of classroom practice” (2006:186). Seven “essential understandings” prevent IEFA from being an “add-on” and in fact are constructed to add layers of comprehension and critical thinking to public high school instruction. They include the recognition of diversity between tribal nations and among tribal individuals, of the importance and relevance of oral histories and belief systems, of the need for accurate historical teachings, and of sovereign rights (2006:189). Predictably, the law met with resistance but eventually was upheld by the Montana Supreme Court.

Three of the Essential Understandings specifically address sovereignty. Essential Understanding 4 stipulates that:

Reservations are lands that have been reserved by the tribes for their own use through treaties, statutes, and executive orders and were not “given” to them. The principle that land should be acquired from the Indians only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions:

- I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.
- II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.
- III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists. (Montana Office of Public Instruction 2012:5)

Therefore, although individual settlers, gold miners, and other non-Indians may not have understood that they were dealing with sovereign nations, the federal government certainly did and acknowledged this fact through treaties. Essential Understanding 5 explains that many of these treaties were contradictory and disregarded for the economic advantage of White settlers (and the corresponding disadvantage of Native people). Although sovereignty



was ended during the termination period in the 1950s and 1960s, the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1972 reinstated sovereignty. Most significant, Essential Understanding 7 provides an extensive discussion of sovereignty: that, as “domestic dependent nations”, tribes conduct their own affairs and the federal government must protect that self-governance, the tribe’s natural resources, and access to health care, education and economic benefits; that “tribal sovereignty does not arise out of the United States government, congressional acts, executive orders, treaties, or any other source outside the tribe”; and that “Sovereignty ensures self-government, cultural preservation, and a people’s control of their future” (Montana Office of Public Instruction 2012:10). IEPA and the Essential Understandings have laid the groundwork for assertion of language sovereignty rights. Exactly how these protections will be extended to students will no doubt be on a case-by-case basis, such as a child who speaks only Salish requiring and receiving accommodations in an English-only classroom.

In addition to legal breakthroughs, classrooms are benefiting from the imagination of innovative educators. Since much of traditional Native communication systems involved methods not limited to the written word, multimedia techniques are being used to create bridges between educational approaches. Recognition of educational methods privileging visual representations – not only writing – is a groundbreaking idea in the enduring legacy of “education for all”, an idea that implicitly recognizes that “writing bias” is a construct of the dominant culture. Certainly it is a bias tied to economic opportunity but is not the sole method of conveying information. Methods that reflect the “combinations of colors, textures, and design forms that encode, store, and present information in traditional Ute formats” (1991:32) have been successful in increasing bilingual literacy and foreshadow possibilities for future development. Additionally, the transfer of language skills that occurs when a student grows up with exposure to or fluency in more than one language has increased the

receptivity of both the tribe and white educators to innovative techniques (1991:31). In other words, the education community is acknowledging that learning may require more than traditional print formats, and putting into practice what is known about multiple learning styles that increase opportunities for students. In Ute culture, “the individual is believed to be capable of critical thought and self-direction” (1991:38); this same sense of self-direction may revitalize education for Native and majority students alike. Adequate funding, tribal management, and collaboration between educators both within and beyond tribes foretell a slow but steady reversal of more than a century of educational deprivation for Native people.

The term “language sovereignty” would at first glance seem to refer to the all-encompassing dominance of English in America, if using it in that manner were not so redundant. Instead, it can be argued that genuine language sovereignty, arising from the rights of Indigenous people, was nearly extinguished because of a concentrated cluster of forces. Fueled by extreme fear and religious fervor, English speakers spread across the American landscape with a conviction that they would write the history of the colonies, that it would be the history of a Christian nation, and that it would be written in English. The political righteousness of their quest was deliberate, but the linguistic mechanisms that occur when diverse speakers accommodate one another coincidentally perpetuated uniquely American English. Bound up with patriotism and a thriving sense of nationalism, this new English became the mark of an autonomous culture. During the same process, denial and ignorance of traditional communication systems suppressed Native voices, beliefs, and cultural knowledge. Even when the agents of the new nation cautioned policy makers to acknowledge and show deference to Native interests, decision-makers used the weapons of conquest rather than the strategies of international negotiation. Even when abundant evidence showed that the use and propagation of Native languages and communication systems increased the chances for survival, diplomacy, environmental

balance, and the mutually beneficial use of resources, those who impelled the political sovereignty of the new nation failed to recognize it. Thus language sovereignty coalesced into a powerful instrument of resistance and reaction against the dominant paradigm that denied its existence. As demonstrated in the following chapter, the impulse towards language sovereignty is not limited by state or national boundaries but is in fact a global phenomenon.

### Chapter Three

#### Minority Language Recovery: Four Cases

*"The nation lives in its language."*

(Alvarez Veinguer and Davis 1991, 202)

Language revitalization is a global concern, an area where linguists, non-linguists, and language communities can agree that saving a language is a worthy endeavor. Efforts begun in the 1970s were, by the 1990s, recognized by global agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe. The European Council for Regional and Minority Language (ECRML) was a 1992 treaty sponsored by the Council, a human rights organization promoting European unity, which aimed to protect traditional languages in Europe (not including state or immigrant languages). The treaty identified 40 million Europeans who use a language other than their country's majority language and over 100 minority languages (Cunliffe and Roberts-Young 2005:86). These early efforts captured the sympathy and imagination of people all over the world towards language retention, and resentment against colonization and the imposition of dominant languages in earlier generations drew support from academics and concerned agencies (Crawford 1995; Gerdtts 1998; Hornberger 1998).

As language programs grow and succeed in creating new speakers, the strategies they have tested and continued to use are of value to other communities struggling to capture traditional language before it is too late. A successful language program can provide a model (or possibly a negative example) for programs on the other side of the world, even though the context and circumstances may be notably different. In the United

States, for example, emergent scenarios include a Salish speaker requesting Salish-language accommodation from a hospital in Havre, Montana, a Navajo mother demanding bilingual (English/Diné) instruction for her children in Arizona public schools, or an Arapaho defendant entitled to legal documents written in his tribal language. Academic programs like the Dakota and Ojibwe language programs at the University of Minnesota and graduate certificates in Cherokee Studies such as the program at Western Carolina University may expand along a path similar to the undergraduate and graduate programs at the University of Hawaii. Where language sovereignty is practiced, even without being labeled as such, such scenarios have emerged and continue to offer advantages to communities and speakers of minority languages.

Cultural nostalgia does not explain the passion behind revitalization movements. Some other sustaining impetus, some daily thorn in the side of marginalized speakers, appears necessary to fuel the propagation of speakers. In this chapter I will examine four diverse empirical examples of minority language programs that have made gains in asserting a place for traditional language in their communities. Each example is from a region where the traditional language was considered inferior by a conquering or dominating governmental force. The case of Hawaiian language revitalization was chosen because it represents a comparatively rapid course of progress, from a few hundred surviving speakers to a thriving language minority – still, however, characterized as “struggling” (Warner 2008:135) – and inspired by the success of another Indigenous program, the Kōhanga Reo immersion schools of the Maori. The case of Welsh language revitalization is significant because it represents recovery from economic marginalization through the assertion of traditional language rights codified into local law; this case is intriguing because Welsh scholars may have consulted with the Lakota in establishing effective language revitalization programs (Greymorning, personal communication,

3/25/14). Other European language revitalization programs, such as Irish, have looked to the Welsh programs for guidance and direction (Waddin, personal communication, 4/25/10). The case of the Tatar language is significant because it demonstrates how an isolated traditional community has maintained its language even under the political dominance of a controlling government and enduring discrimination from the majority community that surrounds it; the formalized treaty relationships it has facilitated recently provide for the preservation and expansion of the language in its ancestral lands. Lastly, the case of the Indigenous Evenki is significant because, even without substantive legal protections and subject to a history of relocation and economic disruption, speakers of the language work from centers of local strength and quiet defiance of negative stereotypes.

By surveying the mechanisms by which minority language teaching and learning take place in these environments and through which language programs succeed and endure, I show the intimate connection between overarching political attitudes and language use, how fluctuations in politics influence the free expression of minority languages, and how “internal colonialism” (Drott 2011) may be diminished within communities that seek to throw off economic dependency as they affirm the sovereignty of their traditional language.

I. *‘O Ka ‘Ōlelo Ke Ka‘ā ‘o ka Maui*: Language is the Fiber

You see, I am Hawaiian but am not fluent in my language. My son entered kindergarten this year and I enrolled him into Ke Kula Kaiapuni O' Anuenue. It is a Hawaiian immersion school where Hawaiian is taught as a first language. In fourth grade the children start learning English. It is a journey that we have set out on. . . . It will be a great accomplishment for my sons and me to eventually become fluent. Our Hawaiian language is dying along with the blood quantity in present day Hawaiians. The language will be all that is left to pass on to future generations.

-- Nani W. Niheu, personal communication,  
December 16, 2013, Honolulu, Hawaii

The yearning for traditional language to be used in daily life sometimes manifests in unexpectedly popular ways. On every other Sunday morning in 1972, broadcasts of a program titled “Ka Leo Hawai‘i” on radio station KCCN-AM comprised “the first and only secular radio show to use Hawaiian fully for the purpose of maintaining the language” (Barcarse 2013:20). According to Larry Kimura, one of the show’s founders, the purpose of Ka Leo Hawai‘i was for Hawaiian language students “to get their ears used to hearing the Hawaiian language” (Barcarse 2013:20). Due to popular demand, the program’s format increased to sixty minutes every week and had a sixteen-year run. About ten years after Ka Leo Hawai‘i ended, a student project by Mákela Bruno at the University of Hawaii at Hilo resulted in another radio program, *Alana I Kai Hikana* (“Rising in the Eastern Sea”), promoting Hawaiian language, music, and cultural elements such as place names, traditional proverbs, and guidance from the full moons (Barcarse 2013:21). These selections evoked an earlier era of rich Hawaiian oral culture, which included prayers, history and legends, wise aphorisms and practical lessons, and chants with “cosmogonic, genealogical, migrational, and procreational [significance] . . . passed down from generation to generation” (Warner 2008:134).

The broadcasts coincided with a resurgence of Hawaiian dance and music, in some ways a reaction to the tourist industry, which had commercialized Hawaiian culture with “cellophane hula skirts, *hapa-haole* songs (songs about Hawai’i with predominantly English lyrics), and gaudy souvenirs . . . In short, the seeds for decimation of the Hawaiian language and culture were sown and largely reaped in one generation” following statehood in 1959 (Warner 2008:135). Yet the next generation was effective in promoting the assertion of Hawaiian culture in a new state constitution, including the designation of Hawaiian along with English as an official state language (Barcarse 2013:21; Warner 2008:136).

From fifteen hundred elderly speakers thirty years ago, the number of speakers who routinely use the Hawaiian language has been estimated at between six and eight thousand speakers, most of them young (Hawaiian Language, 2005:5D). However, language use reported in recent US Census documentation indicates higher numbers of speakers. In the 2000 Census, Hawaiian was the only language that reflected a rise in the number of speakers (Hawaiian Language, 2005:5D); 27,160 individuals identified Hawaiian as their “language spoken at home” (US Census 2000). A US Census analysis from 2010 identified 24,042 speakers, numbers which are both of interest and suspect because they do not include speakers under five years old, a population from which a large number of “native” Hawaiian speakers can be expected to grow.

Hinton (2008) refers to Hawaiian as “the flagship of language recovery . . . a model and a symbol of hope to other endangered languages” (Hinton 2008:129). This positive outlook and the official status of Hawaiian do much to validate Hawaiian language use in daily life and create the expectation that language teaching and learning will continue unobstructed. The successes and cautionary tales of Hawaiian language revitalization suggest steps that can be taken, or not taken, by efforts and programs in elsewhere in the United States and globally.



As with Indigenous peoples on the mainland, Hawaiians suffered extreme losses after coming into contact with Westerners; by some estimates 94 percent of the population was lost to disease, and essentially all remaining *maka 'ainana* or non-royal Hawaiians lost the lands on which they had always lived, forcing an influx to the urban center of Honolulu or to plantations (Warner 2008:134). What Warner calls the “illegal overthrow” of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, followed by Hawaii’s annexation by the United States in 1900, inevitably led to the dominance of English in government, church, business, and education. In a two-decade shift from Hawaiian to English in the early twentieth century, native speakers of Hawaiian experienced a loss of prestige and heightened pressure to use English for economic reasons. “Some Hawaiians educated during this period recall being physically punished or humiliated for speaking Hawaiian in school. . . . At this time, the illusion of future prosperity resulting from the abandonment of Hawaiian in favor of English was inculcated into the Hawaiian people” (Warner 2008:135). Conversely, according to personal stories shared on Ka Leo Hawai’i, some parents scolded their children for using English with other Hawaiians or for speaking English in the home instead of Hawaiian and lobbied to maintain Hawaiian-language newspapers, church services, and educational resources (Wilson and Kamanā 2008:148). The conflict between these two approaches, the contradictory threads of acquiescence and resistance to domination that often flow through the story of language decline, arose in Hawaii almost as soon as Hawaiian came under attack.

For the next ninety years after the creation of the Republic of Hawaii in 1893, English was the language of public instruction (Warner 2008:134). However, Hawaiian survived at the level of local politics because of the influence of multiracial constituents, who used “either Hawaiian or Hawai’i Creole English [and] who identify with the [Indigenous] culture. Thus, through all these periods of history, Hawaiian has been accorded special legal status” (Wilson and Kamanā 2008:148). This undercurrent that allowed the quotidian use of

Hawaiian to continue may have contributed to the public resurgence of Hawaiian when events converged.

The academic presence of Hawaiian at university level was established in the late 1970s when Bill Wilson and Kauanoē Kamanā were hired at the University of Hawaii at Hilo to set up a bachelor of arts program in Hawaiian studies with upper-division courses and, later, a teacher certification/master's program taught in Hawaiian (Wilson and Kamanā 2008:149). Although the program successfully had graduated several dozen Hawaiian second-language speakers by 1982, "there were virtually no children who were first-language speakers of Hawai'i other than those . . . [in] the isolation of the Ni'ihau community", and "it became apparent that if Hawaiian were to survive as a living language, a generation of Hawaiian speakers would have to be born" (Warner 2008:136).

Drawing upon the successes of Māori immersion pre-schools (Kōhanga Reo), Hawaiian educators opened the first "language nest" or Pūnana Leo on the island of Kaua'i in 1984 and on Hawai'i and O'ahu in 1985. Classes were taught entirely in the Hawaiian language, classrooms were stocked with books, software, videos, and original recordings of Ka Leo Hawai'i programs, all in Hawaiian, and children interacted with Hawaiian dance and music (Hinton 1997:15). In the ensuing decades, teachers and administrators have been able to incorporate "the equal goal of a quality education, with emphasis on culture traditions, and values" through immersion (Inciong qtd. in Barcarse 2013:21). The ban on the use of Hawaiian language in public schools was lifted in 1996 following an official apology from the Clinton administration for "the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy" (Warner 2008:133). By 2013, there were 19 public and four private charter schools with the primary purpose of revitalizing the Hawaiian language (Barcarse 2013). The idea of Hawaiian language resurgence as a part of preparing children for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has generated excitement among many parents, who must buy into the movement in order to

make the commitment involved in enrolling their children in an immersion school. The non-traditional process of child-to-parent language transmission is often embraced as a necessity for the reinforcement of Hawaiian language. A parent of two children under five years old explains the complex of emotions and reasons behind her commitment:

Language is the fiber that binds us to our cultural identity. “O Ka ‘Ōlelo Ke Ka’ā ‘o ka Maui” . . . It is very exciting yet a big responsibility. Both of my parents are Hawaiian, [and many] of my relatives on my father's side speak it fluently and I have always felt sad that I have never learned it. . . . I am always seeking out cultural activities, classes, and workshops to attend with my sons. I am doing this in hopes that my sons can then teach their children our language and so on as in traditional ways. . . . My great grandmother speaks fluent Hawaiian. However since my son just started learning this school year, he cannot converse with her just yet. It seems as if he understands the language more than he can speak it. It puts a huge smile on her face that he is learning though. At 93 years old, she has a lot to teach us. . . . I just hope that a lot of other Hawaiians realize that the language is important to keep alive and well. (Nani W. Niheu, personal communication, 12/17/13).

Despite the consensus that “There is no doubt that [immersion] is the best way to jump-start the production of a new generation of fluent speakers for an endangered language” (Hinton 2008:181), not every aspect of the Hawaiian schools’ development has proceeded without debate. Some controversies involve the long-term application of Hawaiian words in academic communities, such as science.

One school of thought is to invent individual Hawaiian terms based generally on Hawaiian morphemes, as is done with other words. The other school of thought asserts that this is a unique set of international terms that scientists use in all languages, with the speakers of each language modifying them slightly to meet their pronunciation and writing traditions. Proponents of the second school of thought also argue that there are so many of these terms, and they are being invented at such a rapid pace, that Hawai’i cannot keep up with inventing new words for them. (Hinton 1997:15).

A more contentious dispute involved a power struggle between differing educational approaches: one parent/teacher group desiring the introduction of English before fifth grade, another insisting on total immersion until the children were older and better established in Hawaiian (Warner 2008:142). Ultimately, there was a schism between the two groups, with bad feelings on both sides.

Continuing scholarship in endangered language programs may inform such disagreements in the future; as more data is collected, parents, teachers, and administrators will be able to resolve issues based on what is best for students long-term. For example, in their discussion of early language learning in the Occitan-speaking area of southern France, Laurent and Martinot (2010) noted that parents can choose the language modality for their grade-school children – French-only or French-Occitan. If the bilingual mode is chosen, the child's classroom will be run by two teachers, one speaking French, the other Occitan, and half the teaching is done in each language. As required by the French national educational curriculum, "teaching in the two languages must be dispensed from kindergarten onwards, meaning that children cannot join a bilingual programme beyond the last year of kindergarten" (Laurent and Martinot 2010:440), in part due to the trade-off between resources and results (more teaching resources should result in greater fluency). Scholarship supports this requirement, indicating that "exposure to a bilingual French-regional language school programme for four whole years is not enough to generate cognitive benefits at the phonological level" among children in Grade 3, but by Grade 4, cognitive benefits are evident in children who have had bilingual education for five consecutive years (Laurent and Martinot 2010:448). This is consistent with Greymorning's assessment that "Hawaiian children were achieving an age appropriate level of fluency in Hawaiian after being exposed to from 600 to 700 language contact hours" and his success in facilitating 540 language contact hours in an Arapaho-immersion kindergarten class (Greymorning 1997:3).

By capturing the cultural imagination of young parents, allowing stronger connections between generations, and restoring and validating numerous elements of Hawaiian cultural knowledge, the Hawaiian revitalization movement continues to prove its "flagship" potential. Hinton warns that "Internal strife is probably the number one cause of

failure in smaller language programs. Disagreement is natural and even desired, especially if it involves debate about ways a program can be effective” (Hinton 2008:131); however, infighting and public perceptions regarding a program’s worth are critical elements of long-term success. Fueled by an ongoing media presence, Hawaiian language recovery can be kept in the public’s awareness and ultimately accepted as part of a global movement.

“When Hawaiian is normalized to the point that it is a part of everyday broadcast, especially those segments that are not purely Hawaiian in nature, then we can truly say that the Hawaiian language lives!” (Barcarse 2013:21).

## II. Welsh, Survivor on the Celtic Fringe

As a country dominated economically and politically by England, and consequently by English since the Middle Ages, Wales has managed to preserve pockets where Welsh was spoken well into the nineteenth century. In the mid-1800s, however, school children were shamed from using Welsh in English-dominant schools. Although not part of an official government policy, the “Welsh Not” was a stick handed to any child heard speaking Welsh in school, a source of shame which the child had to carry until another guilty child had to carry it. The system was allegedly practiced with the permission of parents, and “conventionally had practically the same force as law” in an era that bore strong English bias against Welsh political activism (Morris and Jones 2007:485). The effects of railways, vast numbers of English-speaking immigrant workers seeking jobs in coal mines and factories, and English-language newspapers further contributed to the decline of Welsh.

Perhaps echoing political resistance to the English presence in Northern Ireland, Plaid Cymru was formed in 1925 to insist on Welsh language rights, and three Welsh activists went so far as to set fire to a Royal Air Force training center. A single language school was set up in 1939 to teach subjects solely in Welsh. However, it was largely

considered a quaint oddity, a small boulder in the stream of Anglicization (Morris and Jones 2007; Welsh Language 2008). For decades, the use of Welsh in the public domain was at the discretion of local officials and judges on an as-needed basis for the uneducated. Additionally, “Industrial conflict in the early 20th century contributed to an identification of the English language with oppression and exploitation” (Lindsay 1993:2). Saunders Lewis, one of the activists (fired from his professorship at Swansea University in the 1920s), again mobilized Welsh activists using passive resistance techniques. Among speakers of Welsh, Irish, Basque, and other regional and minority languages (RMLs), political activism and public sympathy were their only tools for gaining attention for their cause into the 1980s. The single greatest windfall for RMLs was the result of a multi-national effort to achieve recognition of minority languages.

#### Legalization and Validation

The United Kingdom, after finally ratifying the European Charter in 2001, acknowledged Welsh, Cornish, Irish, Manx, Ulster Scots (Scots in Northern Ireland and Scotland), and Scottish Gaelic, and in doing so acknowledged their right to be used and recognized as unique cultural creations (European Charter 1992). The European Charter used the following terminology to state its purposes: to “recognize”, “protect”, “promote”, “facilitate”, “encourage”, and “maintain efforts” on behalf of RMLs, written and spoken, formally and informally taught and/or transmitted, and to eliminate “any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of it” (European Charter 1992). In other words, the ECRML was a blank check minority languages could use for self-protection and self-promotion. The definition of “unjustified”

could be controlled by those at greatest risk of losing language rights rather than subject to the interpretation of the national government or politically dominant groups.

The Welsh government went one step further. “With the passage of the Welsh Language Act of 1993, Parliament placed the Welsh language on official status with English in dealings with the public sector . . . [breaking] with a predominant policy of Anglicization and [representing] a significant change in the United Kingdom’s posture regarding the Welsh minority living in the United Kingdom” (Weber 2007:4). Similar accommodations were made in the Gaelic Language Act of 2005 (Scotland), which granted limited official status to Scottish Gaelic (Weber 2007). The Welsh National Assembly fulfilled its obligation to promote and encourage Welsh, “which had the two-pronged effect of raising the status of Welsh and underscoring the need for education using a Welsh-language curriculum” (Morris and Jones 2007:490).

Welsh scholars ran with the mandate to preserve Welsh through detailed research with findings relevant to the broader world of child language acquisition. In a study emphasizing the critical importance of “family language transfer” conducted by Lyon in 1996, researchers noted that “fathers influence the language of the home, while mothers influence the language of the child” (Morris and Jones 2007:487). One-to-one interaction between child and speaker (especially parent and child) is known to be critical to language acquisition, but research has revealed important distinctions: retention and use of Welsh was most significant when the child had the Welsh-speaking parent entirely to himself or herself for extended periods throughout the day (2007:491). Language transfer was greatest when the mother was the Welsh speaker, whereas if the father was the Welsh speaker, he had a higher expectation that the schools would teach it to his children. Also significant, new Welsh-language television, books, DVDs, CDs, and websites for preschoolers served to reverse the typical flow of language from parent to child, allowing

the child to “socialize” older family members in Welsh. Being read to by a parent – widely recognized as important to literacy – further facilitated this two-way street, as English-speaking parents learned enough Welsh to read bedtime stories. True bilingualism (as opposed to code-switching or code-mixing) is heightened through the negotiation of languages in family settings, where Welsh speakers were observed using English out of politeness and to include non-Welsh speakers (2007:494). While there may be nothing new about parents serving as intermediaries between children and grandparents, the Welsh studies show that this negotiation involved grandparents and children speaking in Welsh and translating for English-speaking parents.

As important as parents are in language transfer, siblings, grandparents, family and friends as well as mother-toddler groups provide easy channels for Welsh and implicit support for the transmission of Welsh language (Morris and Jones 2007:496). Another group critical to the spread of Welsh is students in their mid-teens: sixteen years of age is the earliest point at which a Welsh teenager can legally leave school, and it is as well a point at which choices about culture (or “coolness”) govern actions. Although there are inconsistencies between region and urban or rural demographics, recent Welsh scholarship affirms that “Welsh provides a rare instance of sustained minority language revival” through the heightened sense of Welsh identity among teenagers” (Coupland et al. 2005:1). A comparison of census statistics from 1991 and 2001 show only a three percent rise in the numbers of competent Welsh speakers, although most increases were in urban areas where Welsh speakers were formerly outnumbered by English speakers (2005:1). Welsh has been energized by large numbers of new, young, urban speakers and, while some critics express doubt as to the likelihood that they will continue to use Welsh, they do overwhelmingly agree that they will continue to use it on ceremonial and cultural occasions (2005:22). Actual results from the 2011 Census indicate a decline of Welsh speakers from



20.8 percent in 2001 to 19 percent, a loss of 20,000 speakers. A closer analysis of the numbers, however, shows an increase from the 1991 census by 54,000 speakers (Welsh Government 2012). An interesting aspect of the 2011 census analysis, in which participants were asked “Can you understand, speak, read, or write Welsh?”, is that those indicating they could *understand* spoken Welsh increased from 4.9 percent in 2001 to 5.3 percent in 2011 (Welsh Government 2012).

#### Effects of the Internet: Dot Cym and “Welshness”

The Internet provides a messy alternative to the official sanctions offered by the ECRML and scholarship on Welsh language. On the one hand, RML “web sites may act as a beneficial influence” while, on the other, they “may serve to exclude and marginalize” (Cunliffe and Roberts-Young 2004:88). As the *lingua franca* of the Internet, English continues to dominate, which leads many to believe that it may ultimately be the most major threat to linguistic diversity.

However, Crystal (2000) identified six reasons why RMLs gain far more benefits from well-structured, accessible web pages than disadvantages, and in fact, must be used if a language is to be fully revitalized: virtual Welsh pages can be used to “campaign” for Welsh; they provide a standardizing influence by presenting quasi-official examples of the language, literally to the world; and they help Welsh maintain visibility both to speakers and non-speakers. If users do seek out a RML site, then it must be easily found: sites must be maintained routinely and from their inception should “avoid material which will date quickly” while providing opportunities such as chat. In fact, Welsh-speaking sixteen-year-olds, the group so important to Welsh survival, seem particularly well-suited to helping Welsh endure online (Cunliffe and Roberts-Young 2004:99).

Lastly, the Internet allows “branding” of Welsh – Welsh as “cool” (Cunliffe and Roberts-Young 2004:95). Welsh entrepreneurs have pushed for their own URL suffix signifying “Cymru” or Wales - *.cym* – to advance uniquely Welsh tourism, products, and industry (Coupland et al. 2005). However, in 2010, the Cayman Islands (which already had rights to use *.ky* as a domain name) won the rights to use *.cym*. As of April 2012, the Welsh Assembly had moved to reserve both *.cymru* and *.wales* (Barry 2012). Thus the farthest reach of technology blends with the ancient idea of “traditional” to advertise and enhance Welsh culture. Through “semiotically potent icons of ‘traditional’ Welsh life and Welshness, Welsh is able to evoke a marketable and increasingly marketised ‘old Wales’” (Coupland et al 2005:370). The “selling of culture” is an ongoing debate in cultural heritage discussions, but many would say that whatever is necessary to preserve and retain the vitality of the Welsh language is worth a little commodification, and it is up to Welsh speakers to make those judgments. Implicit in language sovereignty is the assumption that decisions about the management of language are best made by those who speak it. Language sovereignty must be seen as something that has always been present, although not always acknowledged or valued; it is not a new idea to be trotted out when economically convenient, but an ancient idea that should be recognized.

### III. The “Second Mother Tongue” and the Tatar Revival

For most of the twentieth century, Russian was the dominant and state-directed language, at the expense of dozens of regional minority languages. In 1991, the dissolution of the former Soviet Union resulted in the Russian Federation and fourteen other newly independent states. Of all the non-Russian states, twelve have a language other than Russian as their official language (Armenian, Azerbaijani, Estonian, Georgian, Kazakh, Latvian, Lithuanian, Moldovan, Tajik, Turkmen, Ukrainian, and Uzbek), and Kyrgyz and

Belarus share official status with Russian. Estonian became the language of official work in all institutions and enterprises on Estonian territory, resulting in a “[downgrade]” of Russian (Kirkwood 1991:75). Ukrainian rose “at the expense of Russian”, and Moldavian also edged out Russian, which “could be used only for business with other republics or in international relations” (1991:77). Speakers of the revived languages appear to have committed “to the extensive development of the range of spheres in which the [Indigenous] language will be used” (1991:75). Yet there are also numerous minority languages within the Russian Federation, governed by Russian language policy. Language policy affecting Tatar speakers in the Republic of Tatarstan provides additional illustrations of the effects of a liberalized language policy on formerly suppressed minority and regional languages.

Language policy was crucial to Lenin’s concepts of equality and autonomy between nations in the years following the Bolshevik Revolution. Literacy in the native tongue was recognized as part of a strategy of acceptance and ethnic (including linguistic) diversity (Kirkwood 1991:62; Grenoble and Whaley 1999). Lenin believed that no one language, and especially not Russian, should be given the status of “state” or “official” language. The first of three phases of Soviet language policy began in about 1920, when “All languages had equal status in the new Soviet state” and serious efforts were made to gather linguistic data, to create Turkic alphabets and orthographic resources in Latin script, and to develop written versions of spoken languages where none had previously existed; efforts resulted in 104 unwritten languages by 1934 (Kirkwood 1991:62; Grenoble and Whaley 1999:376; Alvarez Veinguer and Davis 1991:189). This push for “universal literacy” was considered to be part of the new society, and “strong infusions of new words which reflected the new political, social, cultural, scientific, and technological realities” raised the status of many Soviet minority languages formerly associated with limited economic value and a lack of sophistication (Kirkwood 1991:62). (The analogy to the “country bumpkin” stereotype

suffered by Welsh and discussed in prior sections, is evident.) The Leninist-Stalinist principal “where an ethnic group is given a degree of autonomy at certain levels in the administrative hierarchy [was] grounded in the belief that aspects of modernity, such as literacy and sedentary living, are crucial elements of individual well-being and citizenship, and both consider the use of a distinct language to be a principal indicator of a unique ‘nationality’” (Grenoble and Whaley 1999:373).

By the late 1930s, however, use of Russian had risen so much that, in recognition of the range of Russian speakers and the economic importance of Moscow, it was made a required subject in 1938, in effect making Russian the official language of the USSR and raising its status above other Soviet languages (Kirkwood 1991:63; Grenoble and Whaley 1999:376). This period of language centralization meant new educational goals, which “were at odds with the establishment of literacy in a local language” (1999:376). Stalin’s reign of terror – “individual, collective, anti-national purges, the growth of Soviet patriotism” – and the “democratically expressed” preference of the Soviet people (Kirkwood 1991:63) combined to exalt Russian and diminish regional languages and regional difference.

Grenoble and Whaley identify the period from 1958 to approximately 1990 as the second phase of Soviet language policy (1999:375). By 1959, education in a mother tongue was not compulsory, and parents could choose the language of instruction (Kirkwood 1991); however, parents raised in the Russian language inevitably wanted their children educated in the language most familiar to them, so “choice” had been determined by history. A generation of parents educated under compulsory Russian language predictably would desire their children to be similarly educated for reasons of improving their future employability and broader social relevance. “The clause created much alarm among the intelligencia and others who realized that such a measure, while it appeared to be progress in a democratic sense, would clearly undermine the position of the national languages” and

were considered “arguably regressive and certainly anti-Leninist in spirit” (Kirkwood 1991:64). Discussions about the relevance of certain languages, destined for extinction, compared to the global “importance” of Russian determined that the national language was highest in the hierarchy, followed in order by republics, regions, and districts (1991:64). It is not difficult to imagine how resistance to this idea of “importance” could be considered a challenge to patriotism. Nikita Khrushchev urged the population to think of Russian as their “second mother tongue” (1991:65), and by the time that Leonid Brezhnev came to power, identifying with a non-Russian ethnicity and language was discouraged since it resulted in a “corresponding diminution of prestige” (1991:65). Rather than declaring Russian to be official so that it might be seen as the language dominating ethnic languages into extinction, the administration repeatedly presented it as “the language of inter-ethnic communication” that could unite the diverse Soviet people into one nation (1991:66). Students would learn “the language of the great Russian people”, identify with the dominant culture, and graduate from school with a standardized command of Russian (1991:66). Bilingualism would be an indication of “the harmonious state of national-Russian relations in general” and resistance labeled “bourgeois nationalism” (1991:68).

The third phase of Soviet language policy falls between Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy of *perestroika* in the early 1980s and the 1991 fall of the Communist state (Grenoble and Whaley 1999:375). The reformation of the Soviet Communist party, and the emergence of *glasnost*, the policy of “openness” after Gorbachev rose to General Secretary of the Communist Party, inevitably involved language policy. Critics wanting a pure Russian “[insinuated] that Russian was being ruined by the influx of nationalism” (referring to regions) creating a sort of “Russian Esperanto” (Kirkwood 1991:72). Proponents of minority languages expressed “universal concern on the part of non-Russians about the status of their own native languages. On the one hand they deplored the lack of provision for learning

these languages within the educational system, and on the other they were in despair about the rate at which the [Indigenous] languages were losing out to Russian in terms of their use in everyday life at all levels"; centralized control over languages was shown to be "incompatible" with *perestroika* and *glasnost* (1991:74). The inconsistency in language policy created an "impasse" and a "dialectical irony": "Earlier Soviet encouragement of ethnic diversity, manifested most obviously in linguistic diversity, has been strengthened by later Soviet attempts to eradicate it" (1991:78). Ideologically, the Russian government could not be sure whether linguistic diversity worked for or against its primary interests. (A corresponding irony in the US is that early attempts to eradicate linguistic diversity have yet to be strengthened by later attempts to encourage it.)

During the break-up of the former USSR, the Republic of Tatarstan, now part of the federation of Russia, created its constitution in 1992 and has enjoyed a "significant renaissance of Tatar ethnicity and culture" (Alvarez Veinguer and Davis 2007:187), although, as will be seen, not as a result of national language policy. Visually, the capital city of Kazan, about 450 miles east of Moscow, appears to have struck a balance between Orthodox Christian (Russian-speaking) and Muslim (Tatar-speaking) populations, since an ancient cathedral and a new mosque share the skyline. Among young people, "Tatar is usually their first language but they all speak Russian because it is necessary for interaction in the cities" (2007:188). Developing an ethnic identity of Tatar students requires the use of traditional language, and the "promotion of Tatar language in the republic is one of their central ambitions", ambitions embodied by new national schools which are seen as bridges, "the response and alternative to 70 years of the Soviet regime" (2007:189).

As with most regions in the former Soviet Union, the Latin alphabet was used to document Tatar in 1927; in modern-day Tatarstan, Tatar replaced Arabic as the language of instruction and business, unlike those regions where local language was undocumented.

Prior to 1918, “the native language [was] indispensable as the language of instruction”, although Russian language was a compulsory subject. School was a “secular centre focused on national education, giving high priority to Tatar language, literature, and Tatar history, with all subjects taught through the medium of Tatar” (2007:189). About 1939, Latin script was overridden by Cyrillic, and as elsewhere, *perestroika* in the 1980s contributed to a Tatar renaissance in language, literature, and a reaffirmation of ethnic identity. In 1992, a treaty between Kazan and Moscow granted substantial self-direction and autonomy to Tatarstan, and 36 Tatar language schools (*gymnasia*) were built in “Arabic style with domes, arches and minaret-like towers” in contrast with “the monolithic blocks of the Soviet type that dominate the school architecture in Kazan” (2007:193). The schools see their mission as imbuing students with a sense of pride in their regional identity; “all their spiritual wealth is in Arabic” (2007:193) and is an integral part of the education of Tatar students.

The Treaty Between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan is essentially a declaration of the rebirth of Tatar culture. The document states that the Republic “shall provide pre-school organizations and educational institutions with native language literature; shall co-ordinate scientific research in the field of history, national cultures and their languages” (1994). Instructors in the *gymnasia* teach not only Tatar language and literature but other subjects in the Tatar language (except technology and, obviously, Russian), repeatedly harking to the “mother language” and its importance. The language itself is revered as “primordial” (Alvarez Veinguer and Davis 2007:202), and Tatar parents generally believe that command of the ancestral language along with Russian will give their children economic and political advantages in the future. The renewal of the Tatar language is intended to “allow Tatars to transform and (re)formulate their relation with their Russian neighbours and, in particular, with the federal centre, Moscow” (2007:192).

The “Tatarstan model”, however, characterized by collaboration, formalized recognition of the region’s autonomy, and coordination of economic, environmental, and cultural resources between Kazan and Moscow, “is usually presented as a positive contrast to other regions ... where claims to sovereignty have led to violent confrontation and conflicts” and is viewed as a “model of continuous adaptation and compromise” (Alvarez Veinguer and Davis 2007:188). This is essential in a landlocked region with a substantial ethnic minority population. Language “is the ultimate defining characteristic of the Tatar nation and people (*natsiia*), umbilically attached to the assumed ‘givens’ of territory, ethos, kinship, religious community and particular social practices” (2007:192). Still, what satisfies Tatars is an irritation to members of the national majority. “What some sectors of the population see as just the beginning of a Tatar cultural and linguistic revival is for others an unbalanced and asymmetrical national policy” (2007:202), and each group accuses the other of religious propaganda.

In contrast to the pop-culture benefits enjoyed by Hawaiian and Welsh, Tatar lacks any “coolness” factor, at least among Russian-speaking residents of the Republic. Young Russians are not part of the Tatar revival, lacking interest and expectations with regard to the Tatar language and expressing some frustration about poorly trained teachers. Local rhetoric uses terms like “tolerance and mutual respect” but from the perspective of young Russian-speaking adults, the revival of Tatar culture emphasizes more “distinctiveness and difference than multiethnic integration” (Alvarez Veinguer and Davis 2007:191). They have no need to speak Tatar for work or conducting day-to-day business, view Tatar more as a connection to the past than to the future, and tend to see little value in being bilingual. Most urban Tatars speak Russian, but almost no Russians speak Tatar. Still, the presence of the Tatar State University of Humanities and Education is a venue for Tatar students to continue in a bilingual environment that receives funding from Moscow (2007:201).



Arguably more enduring than a pop-culture connection, the connection to higher education validates Tatar language and culture on a global stage. As an example of the assertion of language sovereignty, the Tatar revival continues despite its unappreciated status outside its own community. In fact, the low status of Tatar among speakers of the majority language seems only to shore up Tatar identity and the culture's ancestral connection to the landscape.

#### IV. Evenki: Language Linked to Local Economy

Settled for millennia in the Lake Baikal region and spread across Siberia into China, the Indigenous Evenki are nomadic hunters, fishermen, and reindeer herders. Their language, comprised of 51 dialects, shows “a correlation between age, lifestyle, and bilingualism” (Grenoble and Whaley 1999:374). Specifically, while Evenki born before 1930 do not speak Russian well, presumably because they attended school when the Lenin era emphasized regional-language literacy, those born after 1940 do not speak Evenki fluently. A system of boarding schools, still in existence, enrolling students as young as pre-school nine months a year, promotes acquisition of Russian. “Russian was the lingua franca of these schools, and the speaking of [Indigenous] languages was forbidden” – an echo of nineteenth-century boarding schools in the United States. “The effect of the boarding school system was to create a generation which had little knowledge of its traditional language or culture” (1999:377), a situation which has particular resonance with Indigenous language rights in the United States.

The shift to a Latin alphabet in the first phase of Soviet language policy allowed the Evenki to learn Russian fairly quickly (Grenoble and Whaley 1999:376). By 1929, collectivist policies had forced the Evenki to shift from a hunter/herder way of life to collective farms and communal property, “forced to settle land which was ill-suited to their way of life. For

example, fishermen could be placed far from waters with fish, hunters in regions with little game, and so on” (1999:377); the result was not only the loss of familiar work, territory, and community, but also reduced opportunities to use traditional language (again, a factor evocative of the reservation system in the United States). In addition, the atheistic Soviet regime outlawed the animist-shamanist religion practiced by the Evenki, causing the loss of community leadership traditionally provided by shamans (in fact, *shaman* is an Evenki word). In addition, “abrupt changes from nomadism to settlement [altered] the patterns of language use and transmission” (1999:383). Thus the Lenin-inspired policy that claimed to endorse language equality was undermined by blows to the very lifeways that sustained those languages – their specialized vocabulary, access to other speakers, and incentives for intergenerational transmission. Soviet language policy “removed a primary marker of their ethnicity” and caused their assimilation into the dominant Russian culture (1999:383).

After eight decades of collectivism, the collapse of the Communist state did not suddenly free the Evenki to resume their traditional practices; in fact, “an overall negative impact” resulted as subsidies that had provided shelter, clothing, and income dried up (Grenoble and Whaley 1999:383). Services that had been provided by the government “such a free electricity and medical emergency flights [and] regular salary payments” were discontinued in the post-*perestroika* decentralization (Vorob’ev 2004:14). Men employed as state hunters and fishermen, working year-round, suddenly had no reliable paycheck, and because of fuel prices, helicopter flights that previously had taken catches of fish to urban markets were discontinued. The Evenki were “thrown back on their own resources” after eighty years of dependency on the state (2004:30).

*Perestroika* resulted in “an increased measure of protest among native peoples about their low standard of living and their right to use their own languages and practice their own customs”, not only among the Evenki (Grenoble and Whaley 1999:378). Pre-

schools and elementary schools began to add Evenki language and literature in the curriculum, some in local dialects (1999:379). Elsewhere, Grenoble is quoted as saying that “In the nomadic schools, kids can get to a basic level of education, but not much further ... It’s closing doors for their future. That’s the big controversy. If they’re taught only in Evenki, they could never get into a Russian university” (Block 2010:25).

With a population of only 5,000 (Block 2010:24), the Evenki lack political clout, and are outnumbered by emigrants who have moved into their region motivated by government incentives. “Today those Evenki living sequestered from other nationalities in their own villages have preserved some knowledge of the language and traditional culture. The children in these families often speak Evenki more fluently than Russian” and families may still maintain traditions and claim an affinity with traditional hunting and reindeer herding practices (Grenoble and Whaley 1999:385). For example, the vocabulary of fishing and reindeer herding is well-developed, and “Many men, including many young ones, are familiar with the craft of manufacturing reindeer sleds” and that a *maut*, or lasso, “thirteen armspreads long, is woven from four straps cut in a circle from a single smoothed hide and soaked in boiled fishgut. Many know the technique” and have imbued it with significant prestige (Vorob’ev 2004:29). The far-flung Evenki who do not live in the traditional community have great difficulty making practical use of the fragile Evenki language, even though national language policy grants them a degree of autonomy; however, these policies “never had the sophistication to account for the particulars of a local-level situation, which might require different sorts of programs” (Grenoble and Whaley 1999:384). In this case, a national language policy grounded in ethnic equality cannot guarantee consistency, recovery, or longevity.

Emigrant attitudes of “irritation or disdain” can be detected through labels such as *natsional* used by non-Indigenous people in reference to the Evenki, “a pejorative term used

by Russians without distinguishing ethnicity, to describe members of the minority peoples” (Vorob’ev 2004:15). Among the Evenki, the term has no negative connotations; a traditional woodworking knife is also called a *natsional*, while a wide-blade knife is referred to as “Russian”, and a small native dog which is not intimidated by reindeer is also referred to as a *natsional* (2004:16). This is intriguing because, in a reversal of the inferiority complex suffered by many RMLs considered provincial and backward, a term used with contempt or condescension by someone who identifies with contemporary majority society may be embraced as superior by an Indigenous person. If the term can be seen as conferring status because it refers to the domestic, the home-grown, the more relevant to local life than something imposed by the outside world, it has the potential to subvert external pressures to assimilate. Embracing a negative stereotype may signal a sea change in the esteem minority language speakers feel for themselves, their culture, and others in their language communities.

As we move from these examples into a discussion of language sovereignty in Chapter 5, compelling ideas emerge: how often and in how many places conquerors have sought to subdue the conquered by silencing their language, and how often the conquered have responded by continuing to use their language in covert ways so that it might survive in some form. Hundreds of languages have not survived this assault. Yet even when the sovereign right of individuals to speak the language of their ancestors has been degraded, disregarded, overruled, and attacked outright, a stubborn few have safeguarded their language, preserved its vocabulary and syntax, and defended their inherent right to understand the world as their ancestors did.

## Chapter Four

### The Path to Language Sovereignty

*[The] words seemed to roll right off my tongue as if they had been sleeping there in my throat, waiting to get out. Still, I didn't dare to say it: "I am Abenaki." My teacher said I had a flair for languages and should probably take French in high school.*

*-- Carol Snow Moon Bachofner  
"Don't Talk, Don't Live"  
Genocide of the Mind*

*Tribal sovereignty flows through American history in a timeless river, without beginning or end. The reality here is that tribes have always been sovereign, a fact recognized in the actions and laws of early European explorers, a fact recognized as exploration became settlement, and a fact recognized as settlement evolved through colonial and into national government. The sovereignty of Indian tribes is INHERENT.*

*-- Coeur d'Alene Tribe, "Sovereignty"*

In Chapter One, I defined language sovereignty as "the inherent right of tribal people to use the tribe's traditional language in private life, business dealings, education, health matters, and representations of the tribe to the general public." In the following chapter I further develop this definition and speculate as to the forms in which it might manifest in the future. By following my discussion of the rising status of minority languages outside the United States with a further clarification of language sovereignty, my intention is to show that decisions about language use are increasingly made by the language communities themselves rather than, or in spite of, external forces. Those who use the minority languages are usually already convinced of their right to use the language ever reason they deem necessary. By beginning with a useful and relevant definition of the term, I develop the argument that those external forces must come to understand the positive implications of

freely exercised sovereign language rights and the ongoing deficit created by obstructing them or discouraging their use. To explain the unique aspects of language sovereignty, I first discuss sovereignty in broad terms; I then identify specific ways in which it has been compromised with regard to Native American tribes as a means to establishing specific points about language sovereignty. The following overview does not presume to be an exhaustive discussion of American Indian political or legal sovereignty, merely a pathway to understanding legal sovereignty and its effects on language self-governance.

### I. Sovereignty: An Overview

One of the fundamental concepts in cultural heritage studies is that of ownership or control over cultural artifacts. After centuries of appropriation, in which the artifacts, resources, and production of numerous Native cultures came under the control of a dominant power, a global awareness that cultures should have the final say in the distribution and ownership of the physical evidences of their own culture was fostered through both grassroots movements and global organizations such as UNESCO. In the United States, legislation such as NAGPRA (the Native American Graves Protections and Repatriation Act of 1990) called for the classification of artifacts as objects of “cultural patrimony” and “sacred” and for the return of artifacts from museums and private collections to tribal ownership (Tweedie 2002).

Historically, the idea of sovereign control over lands rose during the Renaissance through the writings of Jean Bodin. Armed with the “divine right of kings”, colonizing armadas claimed sovereignty over occupied lands and the people who lived there. One legal mechanism used was *terra nullus*, the ideas that the land was “vacant” and thus open to settlement and the proliferation of Christian civilization; another was to declare that Indigenous people had the “right of occupancy” but not of ownership, a mechanism allowing

the harvesting of mineral wealth and settlement, both methods serving to detach sovereignty from the subject nations (D'Errico 2000). Roger Williams had to establish in the minds of English legislators the idea that he was dealing with "sovereign nations" qualified to conduct land dealings when he sought to purchase land to create Providence Plantation (Field 2007).

The concept of sovereignty is most fundamentally defined as "the inherent right to be self-governing" (D'Errico 2000:691) – a right as basic to societies as their self-determination and self-sufficiency, and ostensibly, a term that the majority of Americans understand as "inalienable." In policy dealings, sovereignty concerns the status of the individual in reference to other individuals as well as to larger governmental groups; for example, Plains Indian groups were organized around small family or clan groups, where individual authority was relinquished only temporarily to forge alliances for hunting or warfare. Anderson notes that "The Cherokees had a formal legal code with well-developed government authority that specified the relationship between individual Indians and the tribe" (1995:169). Long before contact with Whites, Native leaders ruled by consensus, sometimes by persuasion, and leadership might change depending upon the season and the primary activity of the tribe (fishing, whaling, gathering, or hunting). The political systems of some tribes, such as the Lakota, were designed to prevent one individual from becoming dominant. The variety of ways in which sovereignty was used, ebbing and flowing as situations demanded, would place tribes in a conflict of paradigms with Euroamericans, who operated in a semi-permanent leadership hierarchy and came in search of a single leader with whom to negotiate, as noted in Chapter Two regarding Lewis and Clark.

Because tribes functioned under more than one concept of inherent sovereignty, interacting with a large, hierarchical government took on kaleidoscopic levels of complexity. Numerous historical accounts attest to the confusion over who had the authority to make

treaties with the US government. “War chiefs were in a position to make treaties with the United States as leaders of their respective sovereign nations, but the fact that they had little control over their subjects once the treaty was signed indicates that the results governing the collectivity known as a sovereign nation did not extend much beyond warfare” (Anderson 1995:170). The greater the level of individualism in a tribe, the greater the challenge of clarifying the relationship between a tribal member and the tribe and, ultimately, between the tribe and the resident superpower. Warfare could have a unifying effect on a tribe when an “us versus them” mindset dominated a tribe’s attention, but Anderson observes that the concept of sovereignty “was developed for warfare, the main margin on which most Indian interaction with either other Indians or whites took place in the late nineteenth century” (1995:170). Individual tribes, who referred to themselves as “the People”, “Children of the Sun”, “the Original People”, or “People of the Longhouse”, did not perceive of themselves as governmental entities in the Western sense. Their understanding of sovereign rights was innate, generally called into question only when those rights were encroached upon. Therefore, interactions with White governmental representatives were implicitly unbalanced, because tribes did not wield the concept of sovereignty in peaceful dealings.

Although Native people and Europeans had different understandings of sovereignty, a point worth reiterating is that sovereignty existed, in practice, in North American before the formation of the United States; in fact, it may be argued that the United States came into existence by borrowing from Native ideas of the sovereignty concept.

[The] Onondagas and other members of the Haudenosaunee sat with delegates from England, France and the Netherlands in the years prior to American independence. During the colonial era, the Haudenosaunee made at least 50 treaties with European powers . . . [in which] the member-states of the Haudenosaunee retained their hunting, fishing, and gathering rights within the territory that they agreed to open to settlers. After the Revolutionary War, the 13 colonies each became independent states and began to conduct themselves as



sovereign governments. Eventually, they set up a process for unified government (similar to that of the Haudenosaunee, in fact) and created the United States Constitution. (Onondaga Nation n.d.)

It was Onondaga orator Canasatego who encouraged colonists to adhere to his forefathers' principles of "unity and amity", a model appreciated by Benjamin Franklin and allowing American colonies to conceive of themselves as sovereign entities and ultimately as a sovereign nation distinct from England. "Many Iroquois people and some non-Iroquois scholars believe that the League of the Iroquois served as a model for the Constitution of the United States. In 1987 the United States Senate passed a resolution acknowledging 'the historical debt' that the United States owed to the Iroquois 'for their demonstration of enlightened, democratic principles of government'" (Calloway 2012:57). Tribes maintain that the United States government cannot grant them sovereignty "any more than U.S. sovereignty was granted by the English crown in the eighteenth century" (Onondaga Nation n.d.). Sovereignty is claimed, understood, and experienced as part of daily life; it cannot by definition be granted.

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas articulated the idea of *popular sovereignty*: "that all government was based upon the voluntary submission and consent of the people being governed" (Greymorning 1992:20). Greymorning contrasts the Eurocentric concept of *legal sovereignty*, "which was viewed to manifest itself within various governmental agencies and organizations" and *political sovereignty*, "which was viewed to reside within the people themselves, and from whom governmental powers were said to ultimately derive" (1992:23) – a sovereignty of control versus a sovereignty of representation. Therein may lie some of the contradictions in the execution of sovereignty: autonomy at odds with submission, voluntary consent at odds with official authority, and the self-rule of Indigenous people at odds with the European paradigm that sovereignty involved a governmental organization.

Greymorning observes further that theorists have used the concept of sovereignty “to justify the actions and principles of members within [their] own social or culture group” (1992:22). The concept of absolute sovereignty contrasted with laws of nature was treated with disdain by Jefferson to rationalize “rebellion against the dominion of England’s sovereignty. However, such noble precepts were conveniently put aside when faced with justifying America’s own political actions and attitude toward [Indigenous] populations, who were being systematically stripped of land, rights and independence” (1992:22).

During the American Revolution, controversy developed around the form that governmental sovereignty would take: power exercised by individual states or by a central government represented by Congress. “The opposition came chiefly from South Carolina, which wanted to handle Indian affairs as a colony. Georgia, on the other hand, was quite willing for Congress to assume the burden, since it itself could not afford the presents for the Indians which its position as a buffer state against hostile tribes demanded” (Prucha 1970:30). To avoid “rivalries between colonies in treating with the Indians”, Congress approved language in the Articles of Confederation (1777) claiming “the sole and exclusive right and power of ... regulating the trade and managing all affairs with the Indians, not members of any of the States” as well as asserting federal control over coinage, post offices, and appointing military officers (Prucha 1994:38). Thus it was determined that a centralized government, not localities, would make treaties with the Indians to avoid state clashes, further establishing the new government as cohesive, sovereign, and separate from Great Britain.

The first formal treaty the fledgling US government made with an Indigenous nation was the treaty with the Delaware (Lenni Lenape) Nation in September 1778, “the only written agreement made with the Indians during the Revolutionary War” (Prucha 1994:31). Congress had authorized \$10,000 for commissioners to give gifts (presumably lavish gifts)

to – they hoped – Seneca, Shawnee, Six Nations, and Delaware participants. Ultimately, only the Delawares showed up at the appointed time and place, Fort Pitt. Apparently “strongly influenced toward friendship with the Americans” by the dictionary-producing missionaries (mentioned in Chapter Two), the Delaware were seen as important allies who ideally would allow American troops to move freely through their territory to attack Detroit, even providing the assistance of John Killbuck, one of the Delaware signers (1994:33). However, as Greymorning points out, “negotiations of alliance or neutrality can be interpreted as a political maneuver which clearly acknowledges that the party to be allied with, or neutralized, can either utilize or has the potential to utilize ‘threat power’” (1992:29). The threat power of the Delaware was realized not long after the 1778 Treaty of Fort Pitt. Disillusioned with the “villainously conducted” treaty negotiations and a fatal attack on Chief White Eyes (Prucha 1994:34), they felt betrayed and ultimately allied with the British.

In terms of legal precedents, however, not only did this treaty allow the exercise of U.S. sovereignty but it also acknowledged an Indigenous tribe as sovereign in their own right, “a people capable of making politically independent and sound decisions required of such a treaty” despite the fact that they had been “conquered, degraded and made a political dependent” of the Iroquois (Greymorning 1992:32). Additionally, some efforts by policy makers to uphold treaties carried clout, as when Secretary of War Henry Knox protested to Congress in 1788 about violations of the Treaty of Hopewell by “avaricious” settlers disregarding Cherokee rights in North Carolina and suggested that troops should be used to defend Cherokee interests (Prucha 1970:39). Knox, a strong advocate of sovereignty, wrote to President Washington that “the independent nations and Indian tribes should be considered foreign nations, and not the subjects of any particular state” (Greymorning 1992:33), solidifying the sovereignty of tribes. Washington appealed to Congress to enforce existing treaties through the regulation of trade, prohibition of the sale

of Indian lands except through treaties to protect Indian Country against “obstreperous whites”, and punishment for crimes against Indians (Prucha 1970:45). Early treaties – agreements made between governing bodies – were an implicit acknowledgement of tribal sovereignty, in spite of the entrenched European legal zeitgeist; “many of the treaties negotiated with Indigenous nations were made as a result and affirmation of the military strength and political status of Indigenous confederacies that interacted with Anglo-European foreign powers” (Greymorning 2006:75).

As with the concept of sovereignty, the connotation of a treaty was subject to multiple conflicting interpretations. Prucha comments that “The United States in these first treaties after the American Revolution thought it was dealing with conquered tribes or nations . . . its commissioners dictated the boundary lines and offered no compensation for the ceded lands. To this high-handed arrangement the Indians, abetted by the British, continued to object . . . they had no idea they were to be treated as conquered peoples” (1970:34).

Paradoxically, the acknowledgement Native tribes gave to American sovereignty would be turned against them. Andrew Jackson, who by 1817 had supervised treaties with the Creeks, Cherokees, and Chickasaws, operated under a paradigm in which treaties with subject peoples were “an absurdity not to be reconciled with the principles of our Government” (Prucha 1994:153). To Jackson, prior treaties had been merely a “necessity at a time when the government was not strong enough to enforce its regulations among the Indians or to keep peace in any other way” (1994:153); sovereignty was a concept that had been needed to distinguish American interests from those of a dominant foreign power but was irrelevant in domestic matters, as in relations between tribes and the US government. Yet even under a changed strategy, when policy makers complained about the wide territory required to maintain traditional Native practices and the susceptibility of chiefs to

bribery, sixty-seven treaties were ratified during Jackson's presidency (1994:154-155). The government continued to make treaties even after arguing for their insignificance.

### Challenges to Sovereignty

Ironically, every piece of legislation enacted to reduce or reframe the status of Native American governance had to create the idea of legal and political sovereignty where it had previously existed organically, informally, and internally within tribes. It could be argued that Native sovereignty has been overridden by legislation since the first Treaty of Paris in 1763, which signaled the end of the Seven Years' War between Britain and France. "France handed over to Britain all of its North American territory east of the Mississippi, apart from New Orleans . . . Indians were stunned to learn that France had given up Native lands without even consulting them; they were undefeated and the French had no right to give their country to anyone" (Calloway 2012:175).

It can safely be said that war and economic upheaval were the major challenges to sovereignty after the early treaties purporting to acknowledge Native sovereignty in the relationships between Natives and Euro-Americans. "Indian agents and missionaries attempted to impose a social revolution in Indian communities, organize Indian economic life around intensive agriculture, and redefine gender roles in Indian families" (2012:275). The cession of three million acres to Whites in the Treaty of Fort Wayne in 1809, the dissolution of the confederacy Tecumseh tried desperately to create, the defeat of Tecumseh and the ascendancy of William Henry Harrison at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, and the Creek and Seminole Wars from 1814 to 1818 contributed to the destruction of long-established tribal ways of life. At the same time, the purchase of half a continent from the French in the Louisiana Purchase and another war with the British from 1812 to 1815 gained global recognition for the United States as a formidable political entity. In

addition to warfare and loss of culture, “European political assertions . . . functioned on an overbearing belief that the Christian cultures of Europe were superior to the Indigenous cultures of North America. Driven by a desire to obtain new lands and wealth, Europeans grabbed at whatever logic they could in order to justify their actions” (Greymorning 1992:35), an extension of “unwitnessing”, Lopenzina’s term (2006), into the nineteenth century. The court system – derived from the same European model that had developed its own particular brand of sovereignty – fulfilled the expansionist desires of the United States government. Three pivotal legal opinions had an impact on sovereignty that would reverberate into the next century. The “Marshall Trilogy” handed down by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall establishing the relationship between the US government and Indian nations further complicated and generally weakened Native political sovereignty – arguably, the intent of their creator.

*Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823) made “[Indigenous] owners” merely tenants with only a “right of occupancy”, overridden by the superior “right of discovery” enjoyed by Europeans, limiting Native ability to sell or lease land only to the “discovering sovereign” (Calloway 2012:307), or conversely, that private individuals could not purchase land from Native Americans. Greymorning notes that “Marshall’s opinion rested on a fragile premise of European discovery rights over an already inhabited continent” (1992:36). The concept of discovery as taking precedence over residency made Native people “tenants” on their own land (Calloway 2012:308), subject to the rule of the new landlords. But rather than shutting down future inquiry in the courts regarding “extinguishing Indian title”, Marshall left the door open to discussion; other than the loss of title through war or purchase, the opinion “does not address situations where a people have asserted dominion over another people, and alienated them from their lands, simply on the basis of an ethnocentric belief in their own cultural superiority” (Greymorning 2006:78). Less about justice and more than a decision,

Marshall's decision was "indispensable to the system under which the United States had been settled" (Greymorning 1992:37), *Johnson v. McIntosh* undermined sovereignty by restricting the freedom of Indigenous residents to do as they wished with their own land and elevated the sovereignty of the United States.

A second Marshall opinion, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) determined that Native tribes were "domestic dependent nations" – an oxymoronic usage of the term "nation" – in the same way that a ward was under the guidance of a guardian, diminishing the autonomy of Native Americans as individuals and as tribes. Greymorning explains that "In a blatant move intended to politically annihilate Cherokee sovereignty, Georgia made null and void all laws of the Cherokee nation" (1992:65). Cherokee people could not employ Whites, testify against them, hold council meetings – effectively destroying internal tribal governance – or maintain control over their own land. "Attacked by Georgia law, Cherokee citizens were forced to abandon their homes, businesses, and personal property" (1992:65). Lacking federal support in terms of sovereignty, "the Cherokees were vulnerable to Georgia's strong anti-sovereignty position" (Calloway 2012:308), allowing settlement of former Cherokee lands by gold miners and farmers.

The basic question was to establish the ownership of land, originally granted to Englishmen by Indians in the 1770s, that the United States claimed as descended from the colonial claims of the British government. Marshall established the so-called 'Doctrine of Discovery' asserting that Indians had only rights of occupancy rather than full title to their lands according to American legal concepts. Title lay with those who discovered the land, and only they could sell it. Marshall's corollary "Doctrine of Conquest" laid the basis for the historical dispossession of Indians of their lands by asserting the power of a conqueror to take land from the conquered. (Kidwell and Velie 2005:64)

In 1832, Marshall pulled back from his 1823 opinion in *Worcester v. Georgia*, or rather, "put clarity to his rather dubious doctrine of discovery with the assertion that discovery could only allow the discoverer an exclusive right of purchase against all other

comers and, at best, this was only upon the willingness of Indigenous nations to sell” (Greymorning 1992:47). *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) ruled that the state of Georgia had no right to arrest missionary Samuel Worcester for not taking an oath of allegiance to the state, since he lived in the Cherokee nation. While this diminished the rights of states, it “asserted the authority of the federal government” over tribes but gave them “sufficient sovereignty to defend themselves from intrusion by the states” (Calloway 2012:309). Despite Marshall’s “correction”, the ruling further constricted the relationship between American Indians and the US government.

In the environment of US government hegemony the Marshall rulings created, the Indian Removal Act (1830) “[authorized] the president to negotiate treaties of removal with all Indian tribes living east of the Mississippi” but resulted in intense pressure placed on tribes to move to lands not as desirable to emigrating Whites seeking profit in cotton agriculture (Calloway 2012:291). Besides serving the agenda of dislocating tribes, the Indian Removal Act was based on the assumption that a tribe could be treated as a unified entity and that they could be coerced to act against their own best interests if pressured enough, or if “rounded up” by federal troops, put in internment camps, and force-marched hundreds of miles west to reservations.

The Dawes Act (1887) further disintegrated the remains of tribal sovereignty by seeking to break reservation lands into allotments in exchange for citizenship. With the goal of “[breaking] up the tribal mass”, reformers could encourage Native people to show how civilized they were by forsaking all vestiges of traditional culture and becoming farmers and landowners. “Indians were to select their own [allotments], but if they failed to do so, the agent would make the selection for them”, and the government would hold title on the land, meaning that the allotted land was not owned, merely occupied (Calloway 2012:420). Yet once Indians accepted allotment, their lands could not be taxed until after the trust period



expired, and the lands they sold could be legally acquired by American settlers. Incentives to stay with the tribe or on the reservation lands were reduced.

## II. The Sovereignty Paradox

Sovereignty . . . refers to supreme political authority, independent and unlimited by any other power. Discussion of the term *sovereignty* in relation to Indigenous people, however, must be framed differently within an intellectual framework of internal colonization . . . The intercounterplay of state sovereignty doctrines – rooted in notions of domination – with and against Indigenous concepts of political relations – rooted in notions of freedom, respect, and autonomy – frames the discourse on Indigenous “sovereignty” at its broadest level. (Alfred 2004:112)

When a dominant power defines sovereignty over or for others, it is subsuming the authority of less powerful units. Thus we see the paradoxical status of Native American sovereignty, “allowed” by the larger United States government, which contradicts the fundamental definition of sovereignty as “supreme political authority” (Alfred 2004:117). This untenable situation has been exhaustively explored by Native scholars. Hernandez-Avila points out that “Sovereignty encompasses the cultural, spiritual, economic, and political aspects of the life of the communities and of the individuals who comprise them” (1995:492). It is a concept closely tied to the land, the traditional homeland still occupied by some, but not all, tribes. “Issues of sovereignty are intimately interwoven with issues pertaining to the land(base) of each people, [a notion which] was largely and intentionally disrupted by the colonialist process” (1995:492). Like other critics, Hernandez-Avila calls for “remapping and renegotiating” boundaries, not only related to land but also to cognitive perceptions of “Indianness.” She includes in this sovereignty consciousness the right of Native women to speak for themselves in both creative and academic works. Anderson asserts that political sovereignty requires intertribal “collective action if the Indian nations [are] to retain any sovereignty” (1995:170).

Alfred (2004) argues for a preference for “nation” over “sovereignty”, noting the irony of using an assimilationist term (in English) for a concept that never existed, or never needed to exist, among “cultures that had their own systems of government since the time before the term *sovereignty* was invented in Europe” (2004:117). The territory of sovereignty began with land, but extends now to ideas of intellectual property and published storytelling, and – by logical extension – to language, as well. As Hernandez-Avila notes,

The experience of invasion, genocide, dispossession, colonization, relocation, and ethnocide is marked at different historical moments by singular imperial, then governmental policies. These systemic policies which sought, and seek, to destroy or at least subvert Native sovereignty and render us dependent wards of the state continue today throughout this hemisphere. (1995:495)

Scholars and critics demonstrate that the relationship between the sovereignty of American tribes and the federal government is interwoven with a thread so contradictory as to be absurd: that the federal government can grant, withhold, or confer sovereignty. Sovereignty, which “stems from their aboriginal occupation of land and their processes of governing themselves” (Kidwell and Velie 2005:13), is administered by the US government. For nearly two hundred years, the legal position of the US government in relation to Indigenous tribes has been that of supreme authority to subordinate (D’Errico 2005).

In the assimilationist era throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, Native sovereignty essentially was wiped away, emerging decades later as fledgling movements asserting the autonomy of tribes. “In contemporary America, the federal/Indian relationship is defined as a trust, or fiduciary responsibility of the federal government toward Indian nations to manage their lands and resources for their benefit” (Kidwell and Velie 2005:13). The “trust” relationship assumes them to be unable or unqualified to manage their own lands and resources for their own benefit.

The sovereignty paradox fuels conflict into the modern era. “Battles have raged over whether a tribe can allow gambling that is prohibited by the state within which the reservation lies, whether states can tax natural resources owned by a tribe, and whether local zoning authorities can regulate land use on reservations within their boundaries” (Anderson 1995:169). Particularly grating to tribal nations is the concept that the Constitution somehow graciously granted authority to them; as Anderson emphasizes, tribal authority “was not created by the Constitution – tribal sovereignty predated the formation of the United States and continued after it” (1995:169).

### Sovereignty and Cultural Integrity

In addition to political sovereignty, the right to exist as a nation, tribe, or self-governing unit recognized by other self-governing units, a nation must exercise cultural rights in some form: “cultural integrity is integrally related to sovereignty” (Kidwell and Velie 2005:62). Without the elements that make a tribe’s culture distinctive, even the oxymoronic status of sovereignty can be eroded.

Cultural continuity is a requirement for federal recognition for tribes, but once a tribe is recognized, it is not compelled to demonstrate continuing culture. Politically however, if American Indians cannot demonstrate their cultural distinctiveness within American society, Congress can simply terminate its government-to-government relationships with tribes and deny their sovereignty, as happened during the termination era of the 1950s. If Indians look, act, talk, and live like all other Americans, Congress can simply cease to recognize that they exercise sovereign rights. Attempts by states to tax American Indians or to reduce federal appropriations for services when tribes are economically successful are examples of on-going attacks on the basic principles of tribal sovereignty. (Kidwell and Velie 2005:62)

Sovereignty as an overarching theme in heritage studies runs through concerns about religious expression, economic self-determination, and political autonomy. As shown in Chapter Three, in numerous communities around the world, tribal members and citizens

are exercising sovereignty, and the use of the traditional language of their tribe or community is their most affirmative act. But even a clearly affirmative effort raises numerous challenges, both for communities and for those who study cultural issues in academic or political settings. Thus the term “language sovereignty” becomes intensely pertinent.

The zeal with which champions of endangered language revitalization approach their cause can actually be a well-intentioned adversary of language sovereignty. Hill notes that “linguists and anthropologists may unwittingly undermine their own vigorous advocacy of endangered languages by a failure to think carefully about the multiple audiences who may hear and read advocacy rhetoric” (2002:119). Gerdts cautioned linguists to “learn to function as part of a team” made up of Native speakers and elders, tribal administrators, even artists and videographers, and to resist seeing themselves “as the knights in shining armor of the language endangerment issue” (1998:1). Native communities may be “hostile” due to “a conflict in goals, priorities, work rhythms, and methods” (1998:3) and a perception (or the reality) that linguists seek publication and academic recognition with no continuing interest in the language community. Communities that see themselves as “custodians” of their traditional language may come to resent outsiders positioning themselves as academic experts and operating out of self-interest regarding their own job security (Hill 2002:119-120). Gerdts notes that “linguistic expertise is not sufficient for successful participation in a language program. The linguist must develop social and political skills to be an effective member of a language revitalization team” (1998:3). Among those skills is the recognition, especially in regard to language sovereignty, that Indigenous speakers have the final say on the extent to which outsiders may have access to the language and what “access” means, on a case-by-case basis.

Hill identifies three “themes” commonly recited in language-revitalization advocacy; the first is the concept of “universal ownership, the assertion that endangered languages in

some sense ‘belong’ to everyone in the world” (2002:120). Useful in appealing to a broad audience to elicit support, the world-heritage approach appeals to a sense of “stewardship and ownership” (2002:122). Yet “Many members of communities that have the first claim on endangered languages may not share these logics or foundational propositions. For them, it may make little sense to say that a language ‘belongs’ to someone who has no intention of learning it, has never heard it, and has never known any of its speakers . . . [and] can easily be heard not as an expression of a universal human value, but as a threat to expropriate a resource”, much as mineral rights, water rights, and land rights have been appropriated (2002:122). Hill recounts an incident in which a linguist was overheard speaking an Indigenous language at a local dance and was threatened by a knife-wielding local man who said, “You white people have stolen every single thing we ever had, and now you’re stealing our language” (2002:122).

The second theme identified by Hill is the “discourse of hyperbolic valorization [which] converts endangered languages into objects more suitable for preservation in museums patronized by exceptionally discerning elites than for ordinary use in everyday life by imperfect human beings” (2002:120), perhaps an extension of the “noble savage” archetype often found in non-Native American literature. Using terms such as *resource*, *value*, and *cultural wealth*, purveyors of hyperbole create a form of “commodification [that turns] endangered languages into a special kind of symbolic capital that is exchanged within a sphere in which only certain kinds of people can participate” (2002:124). The danger of referring to something as “priceless” is that it is no longer useful in daily life; it can suggest that an endangered language’s value can only be assessed by the linguistic equivalent of *Antiques Roadshow* – only by recognition of its rarity, its obsolescence, and its value to an elite collector. If something were useful on a daily basis, it would not be relegated to the pile of “priceless” artifacts.

The third theme, frequently found in any discussion of the urgency of language revitalization (see Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5), Hill refers to as “enumeration . . . frightening statistics about the large number of languages spoken in the world today and the small number likely to survive at some time in the near future” (2002:127). Hill notes that these statistics are used as “calls to action . . . they are thought to be moving and horrifying and thus are believed to be able to mobilize activists to reverse the trends that they suggest” (2002:127). Arguing that enumeration treats languages as units of knowledge, Hill further asserts that “To census is an important gesture of power” and a tool of colonialism (2002:127). In defense of all of us guilty of enumeration at some point, however, *not* to take a census is to operate in the dark regarding the numbers of speakers and being able to identify where the need is greatest, and many of us would admit to being galvanized by the numbers. Still, Hill and Gerdts underscore major issues related to community language sovereignty, and Hill challenges ethnographers to collaborate with community members “to identify rhetorics that emanate from and make sense in terms of community concerns” while having impact on those outside the community or tribe who allocate resources and funding (2002:129). Acknowledging the historical impact of oppression to create a “rhetoric of human rights . . . entails an appropriate stance”, Hill concedes, and Gerdts points out that linguists can “help produce educational materials. . . serve as mediators between Natives and universities . . . [and] serve as researchers or expert witnesses on matters involving language, including place names for land claims, genealogies for treaty research, ethnobiology for land use studies, and labels and translations for museum exhibits” (1998:4), as long as those services are in the interest of the language community.

### III. Language Sovereignty

*Language sovereignty is the right to be able to have your language and speak your language. . . . So often you hear people say, "Tribes, native people, have lost their language." It wasn't lost; it was stolen or taken away. With the boarding schools many native languages were brought to the edge of extinction. . . . Tribes are doing their best to bring back their languages, but most recently that is due to legislation, grants, and tribes having more financial resources in order to create additional opportunities for their people to learn and speak their languages.*

*-- Kathy Lewis, Director, American Indian Studies  
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The words "language" and "sovereignty" in the same breath seem to have appeared first in an article by Don Thornton (Cherokee) in the October 2009 issue of *Indian Gaming*. "Every few decades a serious challenge arises to test the nation-to-nation status that tribes enjoy with the U.S. government. Without languages, tribes will become more vulnerable to these challenges" Thornton argued, going on to note that a tribe's "authenticity" in courts of law has been contingent on "the ability of tribal members to speak their own language" (2009:28).

Arriving at a definition of language sovereignty requires an understanding of Native American history and recognition of the deliberate suppression of tribal languages in schools that often were more like prisons, as well as an awareness of how language captures elements of culture. Implicit in the term is a sense of urgency about the decline of Native languages and a sense of responsibility to somehow contribute to the restoration of what was lost. Arguably there is nothing more culturally distinctive than the language of a tribe or group. Whether it is used in religious ritual or everyday practice, the tribe's traditional language is their connection to ancestors, culture, and knowledge essential to survival, morality, and cosmology. Yet language sovereignty has been eroded by two centuries of the primacy of English, not as a companion language to traditional tribal languages, but as the only option, the only ticket to religion, employment, education, and

the advancement they offer. Sadly, merely possessing English has never assured Native people of access to economic and political equality.

The resolute effort to eliminate Native languages in the 1800s and 1900s, detailed in Chapter Two, was also a well-orchestrated strike against political and cultural sovereignty.

“This campaign of eradication had and has the purpose of destroying our sovereignty by destroying our connections to our land bases, given that the home(land)s or land bases inform the cultures, belief systems, and languages” (Hernandez-Avila 1995:496).

Sovereignty manifested in cultural acts and conducted in relation to land qualifies a unit – a tribe or country – to be considered self-governing, autonomous, and self-directing, with a group identity expressed through a language. “Native people have managed to sustain, through memory and the constant presence of the land, their connection to their home(land)s in this hemisphere. This realized connection has made it possible for many Native people to reclaim and recall their languages (Native and otherwise) as their own” (1995:496), a clear connection to inherent, pre-existing sovereignty created through distinctness, difference, differentiation – the opposite of assimilation. “In our own home(land), we recover our grace and our sovereignty through language and through struggle, even if that language is the enemy’s made ours” (1995:502).

Grenoble and Whaley (1999) observe that, as in the case of the Evenki, policies “grounded in the equality of all nationalities and support for minority languages” do not necessarily prevent language loss. Economic disruption, displacement of speakers, and assimilation with other minorities into the mainstream diminish opportunities for transmission of regional language (1999:383). Primary, though, and relevant to language sovereignty is the absence of “territorial autonomy” for the Evenki, a small and widely-dispersed population engulfed by government efforts to populate outlying areas (1999:384). The structure of a national policy for the Evenki did not address “minority demographics,



traditional values, attitudes towards the nation” and, with its hyper-emphasis on literacy, seemed to denigrate the oral tradition (1999:384).

The “Tatarstan model” described in Chapter Three encourages roles for speakers beyond that of language student: speakers as teachers of subject matter, putting the language into action in academic settings. Tatar language advocates recognize that language “is the ultimate defining characteristic of the Tatar nation and people (*natsiia*), umbilically attached to the assumed ‘givens’ of territory, ethos, kinship, religious community and particular social practices” (Alvarez Veinguer and Davis 2007:192). Still, a mere treaty is not enough to create cohesion, and a national policy is not appreciated by Russians and Tatars alike. “What some sectors of the population see as just the beginning of a Tatar cultural and linguistic revival is for others an unbalanced and asymmetrical national policy” (2007:202), in part because the Tatar Republic lacks “a shared understanding of language, ethnicity, or cultural diversity” (2007:203). With a population that is more than 50 percent Tatar but still 40 percent ethnic Russian, it is easy to see how divisions between the two major ethnic groups (accentuated by religious differences, as well) can be aggravated by an externally imposed policy. Where there is no policy, persuasive rhetoric has to elicit cooperation and action on the part of stakeholders:

Tribal language is a practical political tool, inextricably linked to Native sovereignty. Tribal leaders should consider their tribal languages not only for their inherent traditional knowledge and distinct cultural beauty, but also as a practical political tool. Their continued existence will help to ensure the ultimate survival of tribal sovereignty. (Thornton 2009:28)

#### IV. The Potential Range of Language Sovereignty

The choice to use a language other than the dominant language on a routine basis is intrinsically an act of defiance by speakers. Those who take this contrary stance can easily become the targets of indignation, perceived as a sort of cultural inconvenience, and

be expected to address the futility of resuscitation efforts. Perhaps such reactions are inevitable, but recognition of language sovereignty in the United States as a right of Native people must also include an acknowledgement that such attitudes should not be allowed to deter language revitalization efforts. Language sovereignty confers the right of a people to assert their sovereign language, the traditional language of their tribe, in whatever venues they deem appropriate without outside interference, and to refrain from using it or allowing its use – for example, in sacred or private ceremonies. Excluding non-tribal members from speaking the language is inherently controversial in a culture that believes in universal access. Language sovereignty may be the most tangible form of political sovereignty in its direct connection to thinking as the ancestors thought, before conquest, before a foreign paradigm defined Native people to bring about their submission.

Language sovereignty requires tribes to make, or to continue to make, decisions about when the language will be used, where it can be used, and who should use it. Inevitably, this places traditional-language speakers in conflict with the dominant forms of education, business, and federal government. Unrestricted language rights and technology give tribes the ability to broadcast traditional-language programs on the Internet, radio, and television, presenting new decisions to be made by elders and those who have learned to speak the language.

Economic considerations also may influence how a tribe decides to allocate financial resources. “Particularly in circumstances of transition and economic instability, or periods of political and social insecurity, language becomes a symbol of cohesion, an indicator of heritage and roots, a symbol and political force allowing people to proclaim their belonging to a certain group” (Alvarez Veinguer and Davis 1999:197). Without a governing policy, a tribe could decide to eliminate language programs or just as easily decide to privilege them to increase morale and to secure the tribe’s distinct status.

With the increased use of Native languages, awareness of Native languages in the public, and a sense of ownership of Native speech among tribal people, in contrast to “universal ownership” identified by Hill (2002), the potential exists for language sovereignty to be linked to other matters of Native identity. Among Native people who are bilingual in their traditional language and English, there is the ability and necessity to have some say about loan words that bridged the long-ago linguistic gap between the language of Natives and colonists. Of greatest concern, English contains an array of pejorative terms for Native men and women supposedly derived from Native linguistic roots. Perhaps the most widely-publicized controversy in recent times is over the word “squaw”, discussed in public venues from academic conferences to Oprah Winfrey. Among others, Marge Bruchac, an Abenaki historian, maintains that it is derived from *sqwe* or *sqwa* and is used in the present day by Abenaki women in polite conversation and song: “*nidobaskwa*” for a female friend, “*manigebeskwa*” for a woman of the woods, and “*nuncksquassis*” to welcome a baby girl (1999). Perhaps due to the appearance of activist Suzan Harjo on the Oprah Winfrey show in 1992 and the publication of an anthology of American Indian literature (Sanders and Peek 1973), several states responded to the call to remove it from place names.

Given recent initiatives to change place names, clearly the “squaw” discussion is a flashpoint where the mass media ignited concerns over language, racism, and sexism – a perfect storm of “good TV.” In terms of public awareness of Native Americans, Native American issues, and Native American women’s issues, a better media event could not have been designed by a public relations firm. Yet Bruchac maintains that the problem is not in the word but in yet another imposition of well-intentioned White feminist ideology on Native people: “As a traditionalist and historian, I am deeply suspicious of how modern political attitudes are often applied to the past without careful consideration of origins” (1999:n.p.). The issue deserving consideration is not a word with rich historic meaning in an

array of Native languages but how best to eradicate ignorance and racist name-calling in any situation; Bruchac notes:

It is my firm belief that the only way to stop people from continuing to use this word as an insult, is to educate them regarding its actual meaning and context, and whenever it is used inappropriately, to take that as yet another opportunity to educate. No, I don't think people should indiscriminately call women "squaw," but attacking the word only replaces insult with ignorance. We are smarter than that, and if more people still spoke [Indigenous] languages, there would be greater understanding of [Indigenous] words. . . . If the word ending "-skwa" caused no shame to our female ancestors who spoke the language before contact, are we smarter than them when we now say it's an insulting sound? (Bruchac 1999:n.p.)

Rather than sacrifice yet another Native artifact – this time, one of linguistic hegemony – because of a current wave of sisterly solidarity, the public's awareness of Native concerns may be better served by a discussion of linguistic evidence. Bruchac notes that even the most recently favored term "Native American" is a product of a colonialist paradigm suggesting that "Native" people fall under the misnomer "American" (1999), only slightly less accurate than the political categorization "American Indian."

Still, "protesters have a point when they say special terms for minority women are inherently demeaning. Think about it. Negress. Jewess. Sixty years ago these terms were in common use. Now they make your flesh creep . . . In 1967, 143 place names containing the word *nigger* were changed to *Negro* by order of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names" (Adams 2000:n.p.). The same consideration has been extended to at least one former "squaw" place name: Squaw Mountain outside Phoenix, Arizona, was changed to Piestawa Peak in memory of Lori Piestawa (Hopi), the first female Native soldier to be killed in combat (Williams 2003). "Before we erase names," argues Bruchac, "we must erase misunderstandings. How do we rename every 'Squaw Rock,' without forgetting the history? One way is to reclaim the original language. 'Squaw Peak' might become 'Ktsioskwa,' 'great woman,' or another appropriate name chosen by the [Indigenous] people" (1999:n.p.).

Sisterhood aside, a certain skepticism regarding feminist concern for Indigenous women has been articulated by critics. Behrendt, an Australian attorney, academic, and self-described “urban Aborigine” (deliberately using a term considered derogatory by many), points to “the complicity of [White] women in the oppression of [women of color]” (1993:27). She further observes that feminist theory, “which sees the world as a struggle between men and women fails to see the pervading effect that racial oppression has on black men and women” (1993:32). Indigenous women – hired by White women as unpaid or low-paid domestic servants, presumed to be promiscuous (1993:30), subject to separation from family (in Australia as in the nineteenth-century United States), rape, and murder –

have been oppressed by [White] women. White women were missionaries that attempted to destroy Aboriginal culture. They used the slave labour of Aboriginal women in their homes. White women were the wives, mothers and sisters of those who violently raped Aboriginal women and children and brutally murdered Aboriginal people. White women can be as racist as white men. White women have benefited economically from the dispossession of Aboriginal women. (Behrendt 1993:31)

Therefore, Indigenous women often “do not see the point in joining the women’s movement” because of its perceived indifference to women of color (1993:34). In addition, traditionally they were responsible for gathering and preparing 80 percent of their community’s food (1993:28), so the importance of their roles prior to colonialism remained intact after colonialism.

As keepers of sites sacred to women, thus presumably of language sacred to women, they were never consulted by anthropologists; as “mining companies or developers have moved into an area, the women’s sites have not been protected. The culture and spirituality of Aboriginal women is being destroyed at a faster rate than that of Aboriginal men” (1993:28). In the current era, because no record was made of female sacred sites by anthropologists and others, the difficulty of recording land claims for the protection of these sites is high and continues to be among the major concerns of Indigenous women, whose

brand of feminism is distinct from that of the majority, and which is related to language sovereignty because of the unique terms presumably used in women's sacred rites (1993:34).

Another realm potentially related to language sovereignty in the United States – defined as the *inherent right to use the tribe's traditional language in private life, business dealings, education, health matters, and representations of the tribe to the general public* has to do with the use of images. As impacting as language and arguably more conspicuous, visual images comprise forms of communication that have been used by the mainstream media to demean, denigrate, and promulgate ignorance regarding Native Americans. Bruchac wades into yet another controversial area of language: the use of Native images by sports teams, automobile manufacturers, and others that objectify Native culture in an era that is supposedly enlightened.

We, as [Indigenous] peoples, must not let other cultures, even other "Native American" cultures, define, and defile, our languages and symbols. . . . The issue of Indian mascots and appropriate usage of Indian statues, images, words, names, etc., in non-Indian communities is far more complex than some activists wish to believe. Racist intent may be the case where the images are used to consciously erase, defame, misrepresent or overly romanticize. But in many regions, the use of Indian images and place names supports the historic presence of local tribal nations, many of whom have yet to be recognized by the federal government. (Bruchac 1999:n.p.)

As with the use of "squaw", Native people invoking language sovereignty can correct and reclaim images, symbols, and words that have been used to abuse their communities. Spokane artist Charlene Teeters, who stood outside the Cleveland Indians stadium with a poster board reading "I am not a mascot", has produced installations to correct misconceptions through inspiring artwork. The use of Native American names, without permission, for commercial purposes – Jeep Cherokee, Zuni housewares, Mohawk carpets (McGowan 2010) – may come under closer scrutiny, with more clout to use against something about which many have felt powerless. The "language of spiritual wealth" may

be seen as no longer up for grabs by the majority society to use without respect or consequence.

## Chapter Five

### Summary, Findings, and Recommendations for Further Study

*Ojibwe author Louise Erdrich states: “The real life, blood, and guts of a language is in the everyday interactions between people” and “If it’s not taught in the home from the very beginning, is that a real language or is that an academic exercise?”. . .*

*[One] of the most beautiful [Mohawk] phrases . . . haunts me as I write this – Ó:nen iehióhe naienenhstaienthó:kó (Now is the time, when one should unplant the corn). . . It is the time for us to unplant our languages, to gather together what has been sown in the generations before.*

*-- James Aronhiotas Stevens  
“lah Enionkwatewennahton’sé’:  
We Will Not Lose Our Words”*

*An elder recently proposed a question to [a] group of speakers and students. Will the people still speak Dakota in the year 3000? It was at that moment I knew I could not plan just in terms of what I can do for the language in my lifetime, but I must plan for the generations to come.*

*-- Neil McKay, “The Spirit of Language”*

In this final chapter, I summarize and address key findings of my research that explain how language sovereignty exercised by Native American tribes affects future decisions about language policy in the United States. I also explore the implications of language sovereignty relative to the teaching of English in increasingly diverse classrooms; as a college English teacher for twenty years, I believe I have a perspective that can be valuable in informing this aspect of the discussion. Lastly, I argue for the inclusion of successful language revitalization strategies in future policy discussions and make recommendations for future research.



### Revitalized Languages

Published in 1993, the UNESCO Red Book inventoried the status of the world's six thousand languages and raised awareness that most of them were in critical condition. Because so much language death was the result of colonialism and overt efforts to destroy Indigenous languages, the prevailing realization was that the world was seeing the vestiges of crimes against heritage rather than some inevitable loss of linguistic efficiency. Unlike tangible artifacts, from which can be teased information about a culture's economy, rituals, and lifeways, language loss is utterly terminal. Once a language is gone, a world of cultural information is gone with it – including medicine, history, astronomy, religion, and thousands of years of Indigenous practical knowledge. UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage produced an international document identifying multiple factors used to assess the decline of a language. Among them were the unavailability of literacy and educational materials in the language and confinement of the language to the home. Only two language organizations, both tribally-run, in the United States participate in the UNESCO guidelines, one in Alaska and the other in the state of Washington.

In contrast to this small US contingent, Europe responded to regional demands for language revitalization in the late 1980s and early 1990s with programs in education and government from the Council of Europe and the ECRML. So, from a groundswell of support for the teaching and use of regional languages, formalized certification programs have produced bilingual local workers involved in revitalizing local economies as well as languages. Employers who hire employees bilingual in once-endangered languages – such as Basque in northern Spain, Occitan in southern France, and Welsh in Great Britain – can reach markets once left out of the mainstream. Aided by Internet marketing, thriving regional

businesses can promote their own definitive alternatives to mainstream products (Judge 2007). More than half the job postings on eTeach, a list of teaching positions in Great Britain, require fluency in Welsh as a requirement for teaching in Wales, a stunning comeback from two decades ago, when most Welsh speakers were elderly, rural, and isolated.

In the US, the marketplace has also responded to the needs of local constituents in a limited fashion. Bank patrons are allowed to conduct financial business in the language in which they are most comfortable, depending on the bank's recognition of language communities in their area. The Internal Revenue Service provides materials in Spanish, Russian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese to accommodate LEP (Limited English Proficiency) taxpayers; in addition, the IRS Multilingual Initiative Office provides over-the-phone translators offering tax preparation assistance in over 170 languages (IRS is Speaking 2009). So, while this provides evidence of linguistic diversity, it is oddly lacking accommodations for regional languages in the US – those spoken by Indigenous people.

According to teacher and activist John Hunt Peacock speaking at a convention of the Modern Language Association, “the total number of Native American language speakers in the United States is more than speakers of Greek, Hindi, Armenian, Hebrew, and Scandinavian languages” (Hunt Peacock 2004:146). In North Dakota, the Dakota language was “the sixth most commonly spoken language in the state after English, German, Spanish, Scandinavian languages, and French” (2004:146). In terms of linguistic diversity, some acknowledgement of Native American language speakers seems long overdue. If immigrant languages can be accommodated through educational and corporate programs, so should Indigenous languages which desperately need basic acknowledgement and support to survive. Admittedly, schools and businesses – which on the surface want to help those they “serve” – have different linguistic agendas. The priority of schools is to normalize

the English-speaking abilities of students so they can think critically, find employment, and participate in civic life – in English. Corporations must compete for customers and will do whatever is linguistically necessary to attract customers, as long as the cost-benefit ratio is positive.

But Indigenous perspectives add more factors to the issue. “Native Americans were supposed to die off, as endangered species do, a century ago, [yet] . . . We stubbornly continue to exist. There were just over 200,000 Native Americans alive at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; as of the last census, we number more than two million. If you discount immigration, we are probably the fastest-growing segment of the US population” (Treuer 2008:5). Disrupted by the reservation system and the institutions referred to as boarding schools, Native communities have experienced more than 150 years of economic and educational marginalization. As Welsh, Alsatian, Irish, and Provençal school children in Europe were punished when caught speaking a traditional rather than dominant language, Native children have been punished by a system that dispossessed them:

The harm caused to [Indigenous] communities by language loss is undeniable. When you remove a people from their language, you cut out the heart of their identity. When a language dies, everything that is attached to it – prayer, song, stories, dances, ceremonies, and every other aspect of a tribal system – becomes more difficult to sustain. People become less confident, conflict increases . . . Language revitalization is not a panacea, but model programs have demonstrated that it increases self-esteem, academic achievement, and participation in traditional practices, as well as a whole range of other positive benefits. Simply stated, when tribal children are given the opportunity to learn their language they are happier, healthier human beings. It doesn’t mean their lives are easier. It does mean that their identities are stronger and that they are better prepared to face the challenges of being an [Indigenous] person in the modern world. (Manatowa-Bailey 2007:17)

Successful tribal language programs will ultimately create new generations of speakers whose “L1” is not English. At one time, about 350 languages were spoken in North America, with more extreme estimates approaching a thousand (Wilson 2004; Fagan 2005). Now, the number is under 200, with only 33 spoken by both adults and children (Woodbury

2002:3). Almost 70 percent of surviving Native languages are known only by people over 50 years old. Yet language workers believe that – rather than a sign of decline – these are indications of a revival, of evidence of the vitality of these languages, and of their importance to those fighting to save them. Without intervention, dire estimates are that “only 20 out of over 300 pre-colonial Indigenous languages will remain viable by the year 2050” (Native Language Legislation 2006:1); that “by 2036, we predict the Cheyenne language will be gone, if not sooner” (Block 2010:25); and according to Greymorning, that “88 percent of the 179 [Indigenous] languages spoke in North America today will be extinct by 2020” (Fox 2003:n.p.). Yet “Waves of language revitalization programs are rolling across the continent as Indigenous communities are attempting to reverse the trend in language loss” (Wilson 2004:369). Linguists – called upon by their national organizations to make endangered language revitalization their number one priority – have recorded, analyzed, and preserved the speech of aging elders. Tribal efforts such as the Piegan Institute’s Blackfoot language program and immersion schools in Montana and Hawaii are pushing back against the implicit directive to fade away. Yet without reliable funding supported by legislation, programs are at risk. Where this funding should come from – tribal initiatives, casino revenues, federal funding – is fraught with controversy.

But language laws already exist, critics protest. The Native American Languages Act (1990) “condemned ‘a widespread practice of treating Native American languages as if they were an anachronism’” but had to be amended in 1991 to provide funding (Hunt Peacock 2006:142). While “2 million dollars for each of two years” could hardly be called paying lip-service to the cause, it was still a small amount in relation to other national expenditures. “Even \$2 million is not sufficient. Much more money was spent destroying Indian languages.” Almost half a million dollars were allocated to the Indian Service in 1889 to establish contract schools. In today’s economy, Peacock figures, that is almost \$10

million (2006:142). When allocated among the 562 federally-recognized tribes, the \$2 million of Native American Languages Act funding amounts to just over \$7,000 per tribe annually and does not include unrecognized tribes or bands. "To put this in perspective, the operational cost of the Cherokee Nation immersion program for three-to-six-year-olds is more than \$2.5 million annually" (Manatowa-Bailey 2007:15).

Another comparative figure that puts the \$2 million US investment in Indigenous language revitalization in perspective comes from Canada, whose "federal government currently spends \$30M annually [and in December 2002] announced a \$172.5M initiative over 10 years to work with Aboriginal people to preserve, revitalize, and protect Aboriginal languages and cultures." (Hunt Peacock 2006:145)

In 2006, three leaders in Native education called for Congress to join in the effort to stop the death of Native language as part of America's heritage. "As use of tribal languages declines, [the National Indian Education Association's] Language Revitalization Initiative is the organization's number one education priority" (United Tribes 2006:73). Desiring two amendments to the Native American Languages Act, Native activists called for "creation of a competitive grant program in the Department of Education to support Native American language immersion programs in Native communities. Citing evidence that effective language programs improve student performance generally, they proposed grants that would create pilot programs for "language nests" and "language survival schools" (2006:73). Indeed, studies show that "Native students who go through an immersion program perform substantially better academically than Native students who had not gone through such a program" (Native Language Law Digest 2006:2).

HR 4766, sponsored by Heather Wilson (R-NM) and six co-sponsors, most from southwestern states, was a bi-partisan effort that was signed into law as the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-394). As desired, the Act authorizes appropriations for funding language grants for revitalization efforts such as

language nests that “provide instruction and child care through the use of a Native American language for at least 10 children under the age of seven for an average of at least 500 hours per year per student; (2) provide classes in such language for the parents of such students; and (3) use such language as the dominant medium of instruction in the nest”

(Congressional 2006:n.p.). Similar requirements are made of survival schools, in addition to teacher training, calling for development of course materials that “service the goal of making all students fluent in such a language and proficient in mathematics, reading, and science” (2006:n.p.).

The Act also creates two hurdles. Schools receiving grants must be located in areas having “high concentrations” of Native students and must be run by applicants who have at least three years of experience in running such a school. In other words, broader efforts are not likely to receive funding if the school cannot prove a “high concentration.” Also, how does a community or cultural center obtain experience until they have had a language school, nest, or materials to use? What methods of teacher training will be used? Also in question is Martinez Act funding, which expired in 2012, and the reauthorization bill presently waiting for Congressional action. It should be noted that four of the original seven co-sponsors of the Martinez Act are still in Congress: Steven Pearce (R-New Mexico) and Madeleine Brodallo (D-Guam) serve in the House of Representatives, and Mark Udall (D-Colorado) and Tom Udall (D-New Mexico) are US Senators. Wilson (D-New Mexico) did not win election to the US Senate in 2012, and Rick Renzi (R-Arizona) and Charles H. Taylor (R-North Carolina) no longer represent their constituents. Representatives Ben Luján (D), Martin Heinrich (D) (now Senator), and Steve Pearce (R) of New Mexico authored HR6399, and Senators Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii), Tim Johnson (D-South Dakota), Jon Tester (D-Montana), and Tom Udall (D-New Mexico) authored of S3546 (Akaka resigned effective December 12, 2012). The National Indian Education Association urged Congress to sustain

the Martinez Act “as an investment in the Cultural and Language Revitalization goals of the tribes throughout Indian Country” (NIEA 2013:n.d.). As of September 2012, the bill was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce (Library of Congress).

In June 2013, co-sponsors introduced legislation titled the BUILD Act (S1131) to the US Senate (NM Delegation 2013), and similar legislation (HR2367) was proposed to the House. An acronym for the “Building Upon Unique Indian Learning and Development Act” (not to be confused with the “Brownfields Utilization, Investment, and Local Development Act of 2013” related to EPA grants), the education-related BUILD Act makes several robust proposals: an “in-school facility innovation program contest in which institutions of higher education, including Tribal Colleges and Universities . . . are encouraged to consider solving the problem of how to improve school facilities for tribal schools and schools served by the Bureau of Indian Education for problem-based learning in their coursework and through extracurricular opportunities” (US Congress 2013:2). In addition to the contest, a Joint Oversight Board would be established, co-chaired by the Department of Education and the Department of the Interior to “coordinate technical assistance, resource distribution, and capacity building between the two departments on the education of and for Native American students” (2013:3). The proposed act revises the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to authorize grants for establishing a “pipeline” for the creation of

a program that shall prepare, recruit, and provide continuing education for teachers and administrators of Native American students, in particular for teachers of – (1) science, engineering, technology, and mathematics; (2) subjects that lead to health professions; and (3) green skills and ‘middle skills’, including electrical, welding, technology, plumbing, and green jobs. (2013:4-5)

The BUILD Act would also relieve schools of the requirement to hire only teachers certified as “highly qualified” in regard to Native American languages, but also charges state educational agencies to develop “alternative licensure or certification for teachers of a

Native language” (2013:7). Perhaps the BUILD Act’s most promising language concerns a “Grant Program to Ensure the Survival and Continuing Vitality of Native American Languages” for the purpose of supporting programs such as community projects “designed to bring older and younger Native Americans together to facilitate and encourage the transfer of Native American language skills from one generation to another” and to teach, interpret, develop teaching materials, and train students in producing radio and broadcasts in Native American languages (2013:9). Grant funding could also be used to “provide instruction and child care through the use of a Native American language for at least 10 children under the age of 7 for an average of at least 500 hours per year per student” and “provide classes in a Native American language for parents (or legal guardians) of students enrolled in a Native American language nest” (2013:9); in addition, the BUILD Act specifically authorizes federal grant funding up to 80 percent of the cost of immersion programs, master-apprentice programs, language camps, and cooperative programs with institutions of higher education (2013:16). With the goals of language fluency and “academic proficiency” in math, reading and language arts, and science, the BUILD Act casts a broad net over the concerns identified by tribes, academics, and a concerned public.

Although the language of the BUILD Act does not specifically mention the Martinez Act, Representative Ben Lujan clarified (personal communication, September 16, 2013) that he

reintroduced the legislation in February of this year. The Esther Martinez Native American Language Preservation Act [HR 726] was then referred to the Education and Workforce Committee. In April, it was referred to the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training, where it is awaiting further action . . . Language preservation is a vital component of broader efforts to preserve the nuances of Native American culture and traditions that are often lost in translation. I will continue to advocate for the passage of this important legislation, and I am hopeful that the subcommittee will take action on the bill this Congress.



Tom Udall (Senate-NM and member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee) pointed out that the proposed BUILD Act “takes many positive steps to improve Indian education, including reauthorization of the Esther Martinez Act - legislation I originally helped pass to honor one of New Mexico's strongest advocates of preserving Native heritage and language. Native students deserve schools that honor their unique language needs so they can create a new generation of tribal leaders, and I am proud to lead efforts in proposing solutions for our communities that have contributed so much to the diversity and history of our nation” (Udall 2013:n.p.). Supporters of the BUILD Act include the National Congress of the American Indians, the National Indian Education Association, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and other Native education advocacy groups.

In a troubled economy, can grant funding be expected to continue, can representatives risk backing legislation that may not be broadly understood, and can language nests hatch impressive numbers of first-generation speakers on a tight deadline? Does the language of the proposed BUILD Act, stipulating professions into which Native American students would be guided, contain an unsettling resemblance to Estelle Reel's contention that Native students should be taught “only those things that apply directly to the student's experience, and focus all learning on skills that will promote self-sufficiency” (Hoxie 1982:13) – the baking, basketry, harness-making of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? On the other hand, programs geared to produce students well-equipped for the 21<sup>st</sup> century work force, above and beyond employment in the fast-food industry, forecast an era in which culture may not need to be sacrificed for a foothold in the middle-class.

Scholarship mentioned previously shows that minority language students need at least five years to fully reap “cognitive benefits at the phonological level” (Laurent and Martinot 2010:440). What sort of proof will administrators demand, based on a fiscal timetable rather than the ability of the human brain to become fluent in a language, in

deciding how to allocate additional funds. The requirements of No Child Left Behind include “assessment testing – tied to federal funding – to be conducted entirely in English. This is difficult for immersion schools, which often begin education completely in the target language and only gradually introduce English”, allowing students to achieve “additive bilingualism” (Klug 2012:12). The BUILD Act seems designed to allow schools in areas with substantial populations of Native American students to circumvent some of these strictures. The Obama administration “pledges that tribal authorities will have ‘greater flexibility to use funds to carry out programs that meet the needs of Indian students.’ Whether it will deliver on this promise remains to be seen” (Klug 2012:13).

In short, “Money has to be appropriated” (Hunt Peacock 2006:144), meaning a steady flow of money, contrasted to months of waiting while a reauthorization bill makes its way through Congress. Would a national initiative (a potential National Endangered Languages Act) providing funding into perpetuity be of timely and enduring benefit? Funds could be authorized to the State Historical Preservation Office of each state for language learning in target (endangered) languages, and ten percent of funds allocated to all federally-funded highway projects could be reserved for consultation with local tribal authorities to promote language projects such as bilingual signage, place names, and cultural programs. In addition, a national initiative could provide for the creation of language lessons allowing students’ home languages to be incorporated into state curricula and programs created to support classroom teachers with strategies for creating multilingual bridges between the region’s endangered languages. Punitive action against bilingual students using their mother tongues in the classroom would be shown to be ineffective and counterproductive to language learning in English. While the flow of money generated by the mechanisms of a National Endangered Languages Act would address one set of problems,

the flow of creative problem-solving from collaboration between and among educators would benefit more aspects of education than language learning alone.

### Language Sovereignty

The problem with federal legislation is that it must proceed through a minefield to avoid an inherent violation of language sovereignty. If language sovereignty is defined as a community's entitlement to use the language that best allows it to exercise its cultural activities, its spiritual values, its economic development, and its place in a larger political scheme, then external control – even under the auspices of legislation with a name as glorious as the National Endangered Languages Act or one that captures the public's imagination like the BUILD Act– is undesirable, and may well be offensive to a people repeatedly offended by broken treaties, racist attitudes, Hollywood stereotypes, economic instability, and the lingering effects of an abusive educational system.

Yet relegating decisions about language revitalization to tribes raises other questions. It would be naïve to think that tribes will always be in agreement regarding language revitalization. Controversies between the rights of linguists to publish and of tribes to keep cultural information private are well-known in the literature and continue to erupt, frequently, but not always, reaching resolution. Even within tribes, “It is interesting how some of our strongest efforts can at times bring about opposition from our own people” (Greymorning 1999:4).

Restrictions on “who can know and use certain parts of the language ... because of their ceremonial importance” have been put in place by the Southern Tiwa of New Mexico, even excluding some of their own members from using sacred language and causing linguist Erin Debenport to avoid presenting sensitive data in academic work (Hoffman 2009:28). When the local school district tried to start a bilingual language program for

elementary school students, the tribal council of Talpa (Pueblo), 150 miles to the north, “reacted angrily, declaring that no outside entity or person had the right to use their language without the council’s participation and official consent” (Martinez 2000:211). Greymorning (1999) describes resistance to Arapaho language revitalization: “As our language efforts intensified so did the criticism. I frequently heard comments about the sacredness of the language and that it should not be in a cartoon [a reference to Greymorning’s translation of Disney’s *Bambi* into Arapaho], in books, or on a computer. Comments like these made me wonder what benefit could come by keeping language locked away as though it was in a closet” (1999:4).

The ultimate irony would be if language sovereignty had the effect of constraining language revitalization programs. Yet Native leaders continually remind their constituents and the broader community that the preservation of language means the preservation of their distinct identity as a tribe (Thompson 2009). Lynn Valbuena, Chairwoman of the Tribal Alliance of Sovereign Indian Nations, testified to Congress on November 29, 2012, regarding numerous issues affecting Native Americans and specifically addressing the end of Martinez Act funding:

Another important step this committee can take is to reauthorize and fund the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act, which was enacted in 2006 to preserve and increase fluency in Native American languages. Language shapes everyone’s identity, but for Native communities there is an urgent need to protect our languages from extinction. (2012:n.p.)

Multiple avenues of funding, legislation that collaborates with the goals of tribes, and ongoing effort to educate the general public about the needs of Native American communities – and the ensuring benefits to society as a whole – seem to be a triad of forces that can support language sovereignty. Ben Ray Lujan emphasizes that “The BUILD Act also includes the Esther Martinez provisions. We included the language in the BUILD Act to ensure we are highlighting the importance of the Esther Martinez legislation at every

opportunity” (personal communication, September 16, 2013). With increased governmental support, language sovereignty can be further facilitated by greater “openness” in language classrooms, discussed in the following section.

### Educational Benefits

George Guthridge, an educator who coached groups of Alaskan Native children to numerous national Future Problem-Solving championships, recounts one student’s difficulty in writing in English and the remarkable remedy they came up with together. Unable to create complete sentences, the student claimed that she could neither think nor write in English and had to mentally translate spoken words into Yupik to understand them. On one critical practice essay, Guthridge instructed the student to write her response in Yupik.

Kasha comes to my desk and gives me a sheet of paper filled with Yupik’s long words. She looks worried. “How will the evaluators understand me if I write in Yupik during the Problem Solving test?” she asks.

“You still have the English version?”

She retrieves it and hands it to me. To her dismay I tear it up and let the pieces float down toward the wastebasket. I hand her back the Yupik version.

“Don’t worry about what you wrote in English,” I tell her. “Go translate this.”

What she hands me fifteen minutes later is clear and coherent.

(Guthridge 2006:222)

Guthridge midwifed two major breakthroughs during his time on St. Lawrence Island: he taught students to approach study as though they **were** hunting on the ice, the traditional way their ancestors had made a living. Instead of recursively working through multiple revisions, gradually achieving an acceptable final result, he taught students to plan for every eventuality and discuss options in story-telling fashion before committing the final results to paper. To venture out on the ice unprepared, willing to experience failure in the process of learning, could mean death. Teaching the writing process and requiring multiple revisions – a core expectation of English composition classes – was a cultural mismatch. In addition, an emphasis on research and practical application encouraged students to think in

ways that had evolved in their culture, building upon existing knowledge. “Four thousand years of ancestral tales amid the rocks – the tundra and sea alive with the islanders’ stories . . . the longevity of my American ancestry is but a footprint on a beach by comparison” (Guthridge 2006:215). With this statement, Guthridge puts into perspective the sovereignty of Indigenous languages and the transitory nature of English.

Futurist Mark Penn notes that “One of the great, abiding myths of America is that we are a melting pot – a big, warm stew of all the ethnic and cultural differences that formerly separated us” (2007:202). Facilitated by patriotic feeling and the unifying forces of American English, the melting pot analogy minimizes cultural differences, and it may even suggest that such differences should be subordinated to a national identity. The melting pot is the symbol of homogeneity, of uniqueness surrendered, of standardization. When the goal of education is for each student to attain at least the same minimum set of skills, a melting pot assures that every student is no less than functional in the basics. When that goal is seen as an artifact of a simpler era, when merely being “functional” is part of the foundation and not the goal, educators must incorporate new approaches to learning to prepare their students for the launch into unknown territory. Among these new approaches, the acknowledgement of language diversity as the conduit to diverse ways of thinking seems essential to 21<sup>st</sup>-century educational practice. Rote memorization and entrenched strategies from the dominant culture may be less than relevant in the future into which students walk.

Since the earliest days of the American republic, when luminaries such as Noah Webster and John Adams called for English to become the language of the global marketplace, the position of English as the dominant language of public discourse has rarely been questioned. Yet a kaleidoscope of shifts in immigration, language revitalization, and efforts to improve literacy suggest that language use may diversify quickly in many regions in the coming decades.

Where education, language, and law intersect, some fascinating conjectures can be made about the realities of language use in the US in the next three or four decades. To futurists, a primary forecast is a statement of what will happen if things continue in their present pattern; secondary forecasts discuss alternative possibilities, including those which involve a change in the present pattern; and tertiary forecasts predict the most likely course of events (Cornish 2004). For endangered language survival, each of these suggests a range of likelihoods and possibilities, with some room left for miracles. In the following section, I explain how the changing landscape of language diversity in the United States requires greater flexibility in the perception of English as the dominant form of linguistic currency. Against this backdrop, I discuss the opportunities for language protection and the potential for language policy and language sovereignty.

### “Secure” Languages

Between census years 1990 and 2000, the number of United States households where English was spoken poorly or not at all increased from eight million to almost 12 million people – a 50 percent increase. In terms of population, the 25 million people in this group comprised a small country within US borders, with resident numbers greater than that of Guatemala and Taiwan at that time (Penn 2007:203). More recently, the US Census Bureau reported that for the years 2007-2011, 20.3 percent of US households consist of speakers of languages other than English, or about 63.3 million individuals (US Census 2012). Since 1980, speakers of non-English languages have increased by 140 percent. While Spanish speakers accounted for the biggest part of the increase, the American Community Survey from 2006 to 2010 identified 169 Native North American languages spoken at home, excluding languages spoken in Hawaii, and accounting for just over

372,095 speakers recorded in the survey (US Census, "Native North American Languages", 2011).

The numbers of "language isolates" (non-English speakers) are in part due to the highest levels of immigration since the early twentieth century at rates which tripled between 1970 and 2007 (Penn 2007:203). Yet immigration alone does not account for the astronomical increase of non-English-speaking households. In about seventy percent of linguistically isolated households, heads of households were born in the United States. A substantial minority is able to socialize, shop, and function at low-income jobs, with only a passing use of English. In addition, while the statistics largely reflect the numbers of Spanish-speaking immigrants, they do not reveal the whole picture: China, the Philippines, India, and Vietnam were the countries of origin of over four million immigrants in the 2000 census (Malone et al. 2003:5). The 2010 US Census reported that, not including English and Spanish, the greatest numbers of non-English speakers spoke Chinese, Tagalog, French, Vietnamese, German, and Korean, but only 134 Native American languages (US Census Bureau, "New Census Bureau Report", 2010). The contradictory enumeration of spoken Native languages may reflect incomplete or inaccurate methods of data gathering.

The children of these households attend schools with inconsistent levels of resources for ESL (English as a Second Language) or the more recent designation, ELL (English Language Learners). A transfer from one school to another could result in a completely different diagnosis of English-language ability and class placement. Whether in immersion or pull-out programs, children bridge the gap between public and home languages with varying degrees of success. Additionally, whether or not accommodations are made for children who live in non-English speaking homes, language diversity is not decreasing and in fact promises to become one of the major issues in education.



The children of linguistically-isolated immigrants and residents are usually expected by their families to learn English; their school administrators and teachers hold the same, perhaps higher, expectation. Families may not know how to reinforce the use of English, and responses are varied; some parents are resistant to the use of English in the home, while others encourage their children to forget Spanish or Russian and to concentrate on English to improve their opportunities. For example, “Latinos display near-universal support for teaching English to the children of immigrants”, and across the spectrum of political and income groups there is agreement that immigrants need to speak English. The marketplace also has an influence; the \$700 billion attributed to Latino purchasing power motivates businesses to appeal to Spanish speakers in most areas and pockets of Russian, Vietnamese, Korean, or Chinese speakers in other culturally-concentrated areas (Penn 2007:203).

So the teaching and learning of English as the language of civic life and commerce is not in dispute, and schools generally do the best they can to raise the English skills of all students, given limited resources. However, a growing English-only movement, which has promoted an English-Only Amendment that has passed in 23 states, stresses to immigrants that English should be learned as quickly as possible, but with very little funding. Historically, English-only movements coincide with times of high immigration, no doubt as a sense of alarm rumbles across certain sectors of society uncomfortable with accommodating cultural difference. Condemned by linguists, who see the movement as racist and outdated, English-only ideology puts language-minority children at risk in public school (Beykont 2002). The sheer number of foreign-born children entering the school system emphasizes the need for effective ELL programs that provide a continuation for students through the grades – and even for their parents. Mark Penn asserts that the government “should commit to providing

English education to everyone who wants it” (2007:205). However, the trick is to do this without sacrificing the home language and leading to denigration of the home culture.

So what would American schools do, faced with future thousands of Salish- or Ojibwe- or Cherokee-speaking children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Given the egregious statistics often associated with the performance of Native children in public schools, the impulse to maintain an English-only façade may be short-sighted. In some communities, drop-out rates of Native high school students approach two-thirds. Activists note that educational institutions have historically created conditions for Native students that made success unreachable or that “implicitly or explicitly denigrate Indigenous Peoples” (Hunt Peacock 2004:366). To avoid this, educators and policy makers could consider the benefits of “futuring” regarding these issues.

#### *Primary Forecast*

*Primary Forecast: A primary forecast is a statement of what will happen if things continue in the present pattern.*

In 1982, John Naisbett forecasted in *Megatrends* that Americans would have to recognize that “it is self-evident that this is the time to learn another language – and learn it well. . . To be really successful, you will have to be trilingual: fluent in English, Spanish, and computer” (Naisbett 1982:76). As anticipated based on the trend noted between 1990 and 2000, the 2010 census reflected another startling increase in the number of people in America who speak only one language – and the language was not English. Naisbett looked to the past and the future in noting that, in the 1850s, buoyed by technological advancements and the spread of Euroamericans across the continent, “the writers of the day said we would become one world with one language: English. That didn’t occur then

and it is not going to happen now, although English will continue to grow as a business language off to the side” (1982:76).

In a time when money is tight, hiring and spending have been frozen by state governments, and numbers of immigrants are increasing, incredible pressure will be put on public school ELL classes to produce competent English speakers and writers. The individualized programs and attention that facilitate rapid language learning will be stretched and their effectiveness tested. Greymorning’s Accelerated Second Language Acquisition method, introduced to Native communities in Australia, Canada, and the United States, is one program enabling rapid functionality in traditional language. At the University of Montana, students were able to tell stories in Arapaho and translate them into English after 18 hours of instruction. “At the end of 5 weeks, students have received 270 minutes of language instruction (4.5 hours) and have learned 40 words and over 140 different phrases. They are presently on a learning curve that has them learning to understand a new phrase every 2 minutes of instruction” (Greymorning 2013:n.p.). After only three months of instruction in an introductory college course, students “showed that they can say over 110 phrases in Arapaho. These are not random phrases but phrases that reflect things that could potentially come up in conversations” (2013:n.p.). Former students of the ASLA method report that “I have learned more Mi’gmaw in the last week than I have for the last ten years using different ways” and that students hunger for more opportunities to use the language, both in and outside the classroom; in addition, they register surprise at how much they have learned without homework or conventional forms of literacy and appreciate hearing the pronunciation of authentic speakers (Wilmot 2006:n.p.). In other words, students achieved functionality in traditional language in an intuitive manner with long-lasting results, both in terms of language retention and in benefit to their communities.

The language nests and special tribal programs seeking to propagate traditional languages while their elders are still alive will, assuming continuation of Martinez Act or BUILD Act funding, be able to apply for grants and attract interns in linguistics, anthropology, and education to volunteer on tribally-determined projects. Without ongoing funding, however, smaller numbers of students can be served, and only highly committed communities will be able to continue revitalization efforts.

To evade criticism that they are teaching “dead languages” to children, forward-looking schools may emphasize multiculturalism rather than appreciation of endangered Native languages. Administrators and parents seem most receptive to “Indian studies or Indian-language education that is framed in terms of academic benefits for all students” and maintain an academic focus (Ngai 2004:270). Using local resources to demonstrate that “the local can teach us about the global” allowed a Salish language program to proceed in spite of initial resistance and doubt in the community. Appealing to parental awareness that students – Native or white, rural or urban, college-bound or not – would need a broad range of multicultural skills in the future appears to heighten the efficacy of inter-cultural education programs (2004:334).

Activist W. Angela Wilson notes that, “Fortunately, there are people and programs attempting to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge into educational environments where children will have their Indigenous identity reinforced and celebrated rather than delegitimized and denigrated” (2004:366). For example, collaboration between college and First Nations cultural councils in Canada produced “culturally grounded training curricula . . . [and achieved] unprecedented positive outcomes” in terms of engagement demonstrated by program graduates, their parents, elders, and administrators. Moreover, they observed increased “intergenerational confidence in the traditional knowledge” (2004:367). Service learning pedagogy in collaboration with Native communities resulted in extremely positive

relations between tribes and schools, with completed projects such as manual labor in the strawberry fields on a reservation, organizing a Web-based protest against a hydroelectric dam, and computerizing Ojibwe language teaching tools for an immersion school (McNally 2004:610). As detailed by Leap in Chapter Two of this dissertation, a southern Utah elementary school in a region with a “high concentration” of Ute students applied for and received a Title VII grant from the US Office of Bilingual Education to increase literacy in both the Northern Ute language and English. The “Two Paths” or “Wykoopah” program focused on the teaching and learning of both languages with outstanding results (Leap 1991). Montana’s own Indian Education for All (IEFA), Montana State Law MCA 20-1-501, uses seven “essential understandings” to incorporate diversity issues specifically related to Native Americans to the curriculum, including the relevance of oral history, differences between tribes, comprehensive accuracy, and critical thinking (Starnes 2006:189). More recently, Greymorning has advocated translating DreamWorks’ *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* into Arapaho, and in May 2013, over 100 Navajo actors – one the son of a Navajo code talker – auditioned for voice-over roles in *Star Wars Episode 4: A New Hope*, “the first major motion picture to be translated into the Navajo language” (KOAT 2013:n.p.).

Tribal sovereignty over programs is a key component, for only Native speakers can determine whether it is appropriate for the language – rich with clues about religious beliefs, ritual practices, and cosmology – to be learned beyond the tribal community. Despite objections by tribes, such as the Pueblo discussed earlier in this chapter, many heritage language teachers see collaboration between tribal administration and public schools as more than appropriate, a reversal of the tail-wagging-the-dog bilingual programs where the focus and top priority was, ultimately, English. “School programs are envisioned more as a way of reinforcing what the children have already learned in the community” (Martinez 2000:216). Happily, maintenance of the language through reinforcement from family and

community increases opportunities for children to utilize, think about, and contrast the languages they will use in public and private discourse.

The present pattern is a zigzag path. Success achieves publication; failure scares even the hardy away from collaborating with tribal leaders and their sensitive approach to the age-old appropriation of their intellectual property in a new, politically-correct guise. While many positive efforts have been documented, they all required money. When funding agencies become conservative or highly selective, opportunities are reduced across the board. But in endangered language revitalization, these reductions are particularly distressing: waiting for the economy to improve means that elders now in their eighties and nineties may take their linguistic knowledge to the ancestors before it can be tapped. The motto of the present pattern is "If we're not getting ahead, we're falling behind."

### *Secondary Forecast*

*Secondary Forecast: A secondary forecast is a statement about alternative possibilities, including those which involve a change in the present pattern.*

Robert L. Cooper (1990) defined "language planning" as "deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes" (Pool 1991:636). Recommending that planners rely on an understanding of "target groups" rather than intuition, Cooper and others who wrestle with the future of language diversity demand a complex balance of factors. For example, target groups in the United States include tribal agencies suspicious of anthropologists and bureaucrats, linguists charged with the responsibility to preserve endangered languages, school children trying to blend in, foreign-born parents wanting their children to learn English to ensure their economic security, teachers unable to accommodate one more special interest, advocates of simplifying the entire mess by making everyone speak English, and

bureaucrats trying to avoid being sued because someone didn't understand something that should have been available in a language spoken by several million people. Theodore Roosevelt, who feared America becoming a "polyglot boarding house" if immigrants were not forced to learn English within five years of arrival, would wonder what things have come to (Bragg 2003; Ramsey 2008).

However, for Americans to resist the need to become bi- or trilingual is unrealistic in an increasingly global economy, a smaller world that needs to communicate using multiple literacies. An education system that can accommodate multiple cultures through creative problem-solving is critically important. As Pulliam and Lundt noted, "Education is still ethnocentric or national in its focus. . . We can no longer afford isolationism or tolerate ethnocentric values in our schools. Future education must pave the way for maximum human achievement for all the world's people and provide the foundation for problem solving that is also global" (1988:n.p.). Ramsey's study of bilingualism argues that "it is time for a new blueprint of the polyglot boarding house to emerge, one that is national in focus so that the patterns of bilingualism can come to the fore and that the interactions among and between ethnic groups can be seen" (2008:12-13).

Just as public history and public anthropology have come into their own recently, so too could public linguistics or public bilingualism, in which anyone with a library card would be encouraged, even expected, to learn another language. To resist the idea of dual fluency is to disregard the revitalization of regional languages in Europe and the dual-language fluency of America's geographic neighbors to the north and south. Americans may have to come to terms with the fact that every country *but* the United States is already well down the bilingualism path. Even the Modern Language Association noted in 2004 that the potential for teaching heritage languages, providing opportunities for teaching seldom-taught languages, and embracing "multi-lingualism as a national value has never been higher"

(Hunt Peacock 2004:146). The rhetorical difference between an “English Language Learner” and a “Bilingual Learner” is profound, and possibly a long overdue reclassification of students. The label of English Language Learner privileges English proficiency as the only desirable outcome; “Bilingual Learner” acknowledges bilingual students as beneficiaries of special resources out of esteem for their abilities rather than embarrassment for their deficiencies.

Tim Brown, CEO of design firm IDEO and author of *Change by Design*, claims that any innovation must consider a Venn diagram of what is feasible (functionally possible in the foreseeable future), viable (what is likely to become sustainable), and desirable (what makes sense to people) (Wroblewski 2007). If language planning and strong programs are feasible, become sustainable through funding, and make sense to the public because of increased literacy and a sense of cultural well-being, then language preservation can move from innovation into the realm of “business as usual.”

If large numbers of LEP speakers are being accommodated, so can other language groups in jeopardy of disappearing. With so much effort expended to record, document, analyze, understand, and teach endangered languages so that they can be protected and expanded, some cohesive and well-funded mechanism must be in place in perpetuity – not a few million dollars for a few years, to which the only rational response is “And then what?”

If, as Einstein suggested, imagination is greater than knowledge, then capturing the imagination of the public could be a powerful impetus for the broad acceptance of Native languages. And if, as Schopenhauer claimed, the three stages of truth are, first, ridicule, then violent opposition, and ultimately, acknowledgement that the truth is self-evident, then we are on the verge of the third stage. With multiple clocks ticking, federal legislation that appealed to a “pathos cluster” of heritage preservation, inclusion, and restoration of lost identity could also be well-grounded in practicalities: funding from federal construction



projects (on land that formerly belonged to tribes); examples from the corporate response to multilingual customers; model programs such as Montana's IEFA, service learning, and "Wykoopah"; and the buy-in of professional teaching and academic organizations. Language ultimately is a public phenomenon, in the same way that our National Archives, our protected historic sites, and our national parks are public – some recognized globally, such as UNESCO World Heritage Sites at Yellowstone and Mesa Verde.

The co-sponsors of the Martinez Act were responding to the insistence of a relatively small community in creating legislation that bought time for endangered language programs. Native American organizations continue to clamor for language recognition. Concerted, wide-ranging efforts to keep the issue in the public eye, consistent pressure to compel lawmakers to think beyond stop-gap measures and lip-service legislation, and a strong language-planning component could result in enduring funding and friendly policies. As Manatowa-Bailey notes:

The distinguishing characteristic is not the size of the program but the fact that the language has a home and people who take care of it. Endangered languages – like the young children most successful revitalization efforts address – require constant support. . . you cannot nurture an endangered language back to health in 15 minutes a day in a public school program or through an evening community class once a week. Some form of immersion – where learners are surrounded by the language for hours at a time on a daily basis – is essential for creating fluency. (2007:13)

English will continue to be the language of business and mainstream education, as English is one of the global languages. In general, immigrants want to learn English, or at least want their children to learn English, as part of their chance at a better life. But the cost of learning English need not be cutting off young people from their home cultures so that they lose the ability or inclination to communicate with their parents and other elders. As a significant piece of a larger bilingual education initiative, Native American language revitalization draws attention to the need for every student, no matter his or her ethnicity, to

have language sovereignty in the classroom, the community, the workplace, and the home. Linguistic diversity promises to improve the quality of education for marginalized and mainstream students alike. Ignoring the signals “is an exercise in rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic” (Pulliam and Lundt 1988:n.p.).

Examples of functioning programs such as those explained in Chapter Three could prevent having to reinvent the wheel and could inspire language programs. A network of successful language programs can allow communities to select what will work for their conditions and budgets. For example, Klug (2012) reported that “Dine (Navajo) immersion students are scoring at or above the levels of their non-immersion peers on standardized tests, even in English. At Waadookodaading, an Ojibwe language school, one hour of English instruction per day has proven to be enough for students to reach ‘proficient’ and ‘above proficiency’ performance levels on NCLB assessments. The school says it successfully ‘turned [the] model on its head’ by teaching English – not Ojibwe – as the foreign language” (2012:12). Notably, as a registered Wisconsin charter school, Waadookodaading is the result of collaboration between parents, elders, the local school district, and the community – an “intergovernmental” model that bears similarities to the Hawaiian language-nest strategy, language sovereignty brought to fruition (Waadookodaading 2013). The model of cooperation and collaboration, whether in Honolulu or Tatarstan, is one archetype that could be employed or adapted widely to develop constructive interactions between tribes and external agencies. Appealing to teenagers and young adults as those most likely to support language revival is one avenue that should be explored, and while immersion of children in language programs is known to have a high rate of success, the importance of parental transmission – especially between mothers and children – cannot be underestimated (Morris and Jones 2007).

Standardized forms of written language can aid documentation, but extreme concern with “correctness” in written language can erode confidence in language learners. Even college writing classrooms, which increasingly support non-traditional learners of diverse language backgrounds, age range, and experience, no longer tend to privilege correctness over content. A typical rubric, for example, bases 60 percent of an essay’s score on development and support of content, 20 percent on organization, and 20 percent on mechanics, including citation format. This privileges the writer’s thought process, critical thinking, and ability to assemble original and reasoned ideas over standardized structures and grammatical accuracy. Based on techniques such as minimal marking (Haswell 1983), Mina Shaughnessey’s assertion that there is a logic to the errors of basic writers (1977), and an acknowledgement by Bartholomae that adult learners follow “a general, natural sequence of acquisition . . . one that is determined by the psychology of language production and language acquisition” (1980:268), classroom instruction that values and validates experience over correctness opens the door for traditionally under-represented students to excel.

### *Tertiary Forecast*

*A tertiary forecast is a statement about the most likely course of events.*

In approximately five and a half minutes, the video *Microsoft in 2019* depicts children across the world from one another happily interacting, each in his or her own language, by writing on transparent screens, holographic computer images activated by the owner sitting down at a desk, and complicated functions unfolding in mid-air with the touch of a thumb. The far-sighted advertisement makes the point that Microsoft (and presumably other similar

corporations) know what we will need long before the rest of us. Should these predictions become the norm, they offer a welcome vision of the future for language maintenance.

A reasonable forecast is that certain well-organized, well-funded language programs will facilitate learning for a few learners of traditional languages. Small groups of children, mostly on reservations, will learn a traditional language before learning English. It may not be the language of their great-grandparents in every nuance, but it will be a start. Upon entering public school, those children will find only limited resources for continuing to use their tribal language, and they may experience disapproval, ridicule, or racism. Sadly, language extinction will continue, but it is possible that documentation will capture remnants of lost speech, and accelerated programs can produce new first-generation speakers in committed communities. A language can be studied and possibly decoded for cultural information, although it is much harder to do so in a vacuum or from ethnography than with a living, breathing elder who can explain the cosmos.

Ongoing analysis of the 2010 US census should provide a startling reality check for Americans in general and particularly those involved in education. If the numbers of immigrants and foreign-language speakers show an increase, some federal purse-strings may be loosened or monies allocated differently to accommodate language-learning. State education associations may model their own efforts after Montana's IEFA program. McNally's model of Indigenous pedagogy may be tested, criticized, scorned, and ultimately adopted. Ngai's revelation that parents are more receptive to Indigenous teachings when cloaked as "multicultural education" may enlighten school districts elsewhere. The difficulty will be in the exchange of information, which is more difficult without a cohesive educational program, causing researchers to have to reinvent the wheel with limited or dwindling resources.

English-only advocates will peck away at ballot initiatives. Sometimes they will win, but sometimes, as with a 2010 resounding “No” vote in Nashville, Tennessee, they will be sent back to their corners. However, when 21<sup>st</sup> century tribal people ask why they should expend effort and energy on what are snubbed as dead languages when they are beset with so many problems in economics, health care, and social relations, is “Because it will help restore your identity” a legitimate answer? And as they argue, elders will die, and the clock will run out.

Like thriving small regional languages an ocean away, America’s endangered languages may realize success without formal federal legislation, just as thousands of endangered animals might have survived without the Endangered Species Act of 1966 (modified in 1973). However, it is unlikely that America’s languages will survive without the support of its primary stakeholders, those people whose grandparents and ancestors spoke them in daily life. Pockets of revitalized languages will evidence how well current efforts unfold. The European community, which has in many ways successfully emerged from the first phase of language diversity, may consider American resistance a bit – some might say – colonial in nature. The insistence on English at all costs may, ironically, place the United States behind the curve in education, technology, and business. Even Teddy Roosevelt, who referred to the Native American as “an adult child”, would eventually have to agree.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

Raising awareness of the benefits of language revitalization can take numerous forms, through classroom instruction, eliciting the support of representatives in government, correcting misinformation propagated by those same representatives, and providing support for advocates. One of the most promising and practical directions for further study lies in the connections between language revitalization in the United States

and improved health of groups who use the traditional language. As shown in this discussion, other countries are already aware of and are exploiting this connection. Tribal organizations that have an interest in correlating their language revitalization programs and health status of tribal members may pursue grant opportunities offered by organizations such as the Office of Minority Health of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

The connection between language revitalization and better health seems to take the following path: When the traditional language of a tribe or community is reawakened, taught and used in daily life, bonds are created between the speakers, and the language is privileged as an important aspect of cultural life. In fact, the language unpacks cultural life – the tribe’s traditional way of using resources, teaching morality, and conveying common sense. When opportunities for communication are increased, an array of subjects and concerns can be addressed, including health conditions and healing practices. As individuals reinforce their own importance and esteem and the importance of the community, they may see health maintenance and improvement as important to their ability to provide essential contributions to the community, the tribe, the family. Conversely, as one elder scholar noted, “When you’ve been told all your life that you don’t matter and that your tribe is extinct, why should you care about your own well-being?” (Norma Peone, personal communication, May 2012). Pursuing the connections between language restoration and the mental and emotional health of individuals, families, and communities will continue to offer opportunities for productive research. As Manatowa-Bailey explained (2007), stronger identity does not necessarily make life easier, but it does equip individuals and their communities to face challenges regarding tradition, economy, language, and their relationships to the broadest affirmation of sovereignty.

The assertion of “universal ownership” by well-meaning advocates (Hill 2002) is not required for an appreciation of language sovereignty as the rationale for Native American

language revitalization. However, the impetus to sustain language recovery can be refined into forms that are useful and constructive to the communities most affected by continued loss as well as potential renewal. Following any path through endangered territory requires eagerness for where the path may lead as well as respect for unreachable spaces beyond the path, those areas where one should not go at the risk of doing further damage. By proceeding carefully, we may enter a new era of witnessing rather than unwitnessing, of a *new hope* in tangible form, and of unplating in a time of harvest.

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