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Indigenous Language Revitalization Efforts in Canada during COVID-19: Facilitating and Maintaining Connections using Digital Technologies

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Abstract

This thesis explores how people involved in Indigenous language revitalization efforts in Canada have responded and adapted to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic from March to November 2020. Through virtual interviews, an online survey, an analysis of tweets about Indigenous language revitalization in Canada, and observations of webinars among people involved in language work, this research focuses on how people have adjusted and accelerated their Indigenous language activities during a prolonged period of social isolation. Genocidal policies and practices continue to reproduce inequities for Indigenous Peoples and are affecting those involved in Indigenous language work during COVID. This thesis gives examples of how people create virtual pedagogies and engage in networking and resource-sharing online with people involved in similar efforts in order to exchange experiences and advice. Online tools are instrumental in facilitating connections among Indigenous Peoples and languages and they are enhanced by government accountability, support, and funding.

Keywords

Summary for Lay Audience

The transmission of Indigenous languages to future generations has been dramatically halted by the Canadian government's policies of genocide, removal, and dispossession. Because of these violent interventions of government and religious institutions in Canada, many Indigenous Peoples are involved in language revitalization activities in order to (re)learn their ancestral languages. Language revitalization efforts take many different forms and use various methods, including language classes, camps, immersion programs, and community contexts where the language is used and taught. Many language revitalization efforts are centered around getting people together to use a language. The COVID-19 pandemic, and its related constraints of social isolation, lockdowns, and border closures, complicate these efforts. This thesis focuses on the March to November 2020 period of COVID and documents the experiences of people involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada. Drawing from virtual interviews, an online survey, an analysis of tweets about Indigenous language revitalization in Canada, and observations of webinars among people involved in language work, this project gives examples of how people have adjusted and accelerated their Indigenous language activities during a prolonged period of being isolated from other people. People are using online technologies like Twitter and Zoom to promote Indigenous language learning and use while in quarantine. People are creating ways to teach Indigenous language content through social media and are participating in online conversations with other people involved in similar efforts. Online practices and tools facilitate networking and resource-sharing and they are enhanced by Indigenous (language) legislation, government accountability, support, and adequate funding.

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qualitative research. I never thought I would have to change my methods so much! The lessons from your course were extremely helpful when it became time to pivot my research. In particular, I remember you telling us that even when things do not go as planned, we can still find meaning in unexpected places. Thank you.

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Chapter 1

1   « Introduction »

This thesis is concerned with Indigenous language revitalization efforts in Canada during COVID-19. The upcoming chapters are influenced by Perley's (2011) emergent vitalities—ways that Indigenous communities are actively working toward language life. Since chilling projections of language "endangerment" and "death" are counter-productive and even harmful to Indigenous communities involved in revitalization efforts, Perley calls for an ideological shift from "language death" to "language life" (2017, 108). The following anecdote shows the damage that can be done at a community level when "experts" weigh in on "endangered" language situations. Perley (2017) describes "Maliseet public anxiety and paralysis" among community members working to revitalize the Maliseet language in Eastern Canada (110). Perley recalls a community language immersion meeting at Tobique First Nation during his fieldwork in the mid-1990s where the event organizer passed around photocopied newspaper articles that predicted the extinction of all but three Indigenous languages within the next twenty years (Inuktitut, Ojibwe, and Cree) (*ibid.*). This kind of discourse reproduced through media outlets in addition to language vitality assessment tools such as UNESCO's degrees of "endangerment" suggest that there is no future for the Maliseet language (*ibid.*, 111). With Maliseet missing from that list, Perley describes the response to the newspaper article from community members in the meeting that day:

> After the initial shock dissipated an uneasy feeling permeated the room as community members contemplated whether or not the odds were too great to be able to reverse the trajectory toward language extinction. Maliseet public anxiety was two-fold: first, the community members in attendance felt the ominous sense

> of impending doom; and second, they felt the expert prognostication would become a reality. Expert certitude of the Maliseet language future rendered Maliseet community members as mere spectators. As spectators, they were paralyzed with an inability to change the present to influence the future, condemning them to passively observe the demise of their heritage language … The expert impulse is to "save" what they regard as a static linguistic/cultural object rather than promote the vitality of emergent linguistic and cultural practices (Perley 2017, 111).

Jane Hill (2002) also wrote about themes that are commonly employed in "expert" discourse about minoritized languages, including hyberbolic valorization, where languages are reduced to objects in need of saving (120). This saviour discourse is linked to what Hill describes as the theme of universal ownership, which frames languages as somehow "belonging" to everyone in the world (*ibid.*). Languages can be further objectified through enumeration, whereby languages are presented alongside alarming statistics about inevitable language death (*ibid.*). Perhaps intended to create senses of crisis and urgency, these themes can actually end up undermining the advocacy of minoritized languages and the people involved in their revitalization (Hill 2002). Relegating languages to universal objects, however poetically or alarmingly described, "…expresses a form of power that may amplify the alienation of 'endangered' languages from the domain of quotidian practice of those who use them to the domain of esoteric expert knowledge" (*ibid.*, 120-121; quotations on endangered added). Venturing away from this troubled backdrop, this thesis avoids these discursive tropes and, instead, directs focus on the efforts of people involved in the daily practice of revitalizing Indigenous languages.

1.1 « COVID-19 and Indigenous Language Revitalization in Canada »

Indigenous language revitalization efforts in Canada were complicated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (WHO 2021). In Canada, as of June 9, 2021, there are 1 396 798 reported total cases of COVID-19 and 25 843 reported total deaths from COVID-19 (Government of Canada 2021e). The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020 and soon after, on March 11, 2020, declared COVID-19 a pandemic (WHO 2020a; WHO 2020b). Public health measures to curb the spread of the disease, in Canada and in other contexts around the world, include avoiding close contact with other people, physically-distancing from others (at least two metres), and handwashing. Additional safety measures have included quarantines, lockdowns, and border closures. Since most language revitalization activities, such as various language programs, classes, camps, and many other community-based efforts, involve in-person interactions, many people involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada had to stop their activities entirely or reimagine and modify them to suit public health measures. For language revitalization activities that continued in person, language study is complicated by the use of masks in terms of being able to hear each other clearly.

1.2 « Pre-Pandemic Research Plan »

COVID-19 affected Oneida language revitalization efforts in southwestern Ontario. Community members of the Oneida Nation of the Thames are involved in various

programs aimed at the revitalization of the Oneida language, including an adult language immersion program called Twatati, a language nest, and a youth summer camp. Camp organizers planned for the delivery of a summer camp in July and August 2020 for youth aged 6 to 12; however, this camp was cancelled because of COVID. The pandemic precluded a context for children to be immersed in their language.

Let me pause and briefly explain how I came to know the people at Twatati and my many limitations in discussing their work at all. During my undergraduate program in Anthropology at Western, I took many courses with my supervisor, Dr. Tania Granadillo, an anthropologist and linguist who has had a relationship with Oneida community members involved with Twatati since 2015. Dr. Granadillo agreed to supervise me for my Master's research and she introduced me to the people involved with Twatati, including administrators, teachers, Elders, and students. Early in 2020, I observed their adult immersion classes with Dr. Granadillo on Mondays on a weekly basis, which ran daily from 9 to 3. I wanted to get to know people there and learn more about their approaches to language revitalization. Before this, they agreed to host me as a volunteer and researcher in the youth camp for two sessions of three weeks each in July and August 2020. My research plan was to learn more about Oneida language revitalization during childhood by observing the camp activities and talking with the children at the camp, their parents and caretakers, and people involved in the organization and delivery of the camp. This research did not happen because of COVID. The Twatati classes did, however, resume on Zoom[1] (with daily meetings for about an hour) through the end of

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[1] Zoom is a video-conferencing service that is used to virtually meet with others.

June 2020, which I continued to attend.[2] Although I did attend some classes in-person
and online, I am far from knowing about their experiences with language revitalization in
terms of my very limited conversations and observations as well as my positionality as a
non-Indigenous person.

1.3 « A Project Reimagined: Research Questions and Methods »

Now, I will introduce the new project that this thesis centres upon. This new research has
broadened its focus to include Indigenous language revitalization efforts throughout
Canada. The research questions that I set out to explore include: what are some of the
opportunities and challenges for people involved in Indigenous language revitalization in
Canada during COVID-19? What adaptations and strategies are being created and
implemented in place of in-person instruction and learning? What roles can Indigenous-
directed technologies and the Internet play in the promotion of Indigenous languages?
With the sudden shift to social isolation, it was important that the new research questions
directly focused on how the pandemic is affecting Indigenous language revitalization
activities and the people involved with them. This shift meant, of course, that research
activities had to be done safely and remotely.

The research methods for this project are entirely Internet-mediated. This project takes a
multifaceted approach in methodology, including an online survey, virtual interviews,
observing online webinars, and collecting and analyzing tweets pertaining to Indigenous

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[2] These observations are not included in this thesis.

language revitalization in Canada. The online survey[3] was aimed at anyone involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada over the age of 18. Mainly, the questions focused on comparisons of revitalization efforts before and during COVID, including comparative target language use and difficulties and strategies of approaching language work throughout the pandemic. The survey was circulated through Facebook and Twitter. At the end of the survey, I asked participants to indicate if they would like to speak with me in an online interview; however, no one signed up. The online survey received three responses, which helped me learn more about how people involved in language work are being affected in various ways by COVID. I acknowledge that online surveys can be draining and their abundance often leads to survey fatigue. I am grateful to the participants who told me about their experiences during such an uncertain time.

In addition, I virtually interviewed students in a university-level Indigenous language course where they told me about their experiences with online language learning during COVID. In June to October 2020, I worked as a graduate student intern to help an instructor with the transition to online learning for an Indigenous language course. When the fall semester started, I observed the classes and got to know some of the students in that context as well as through email correspondences about technology (e.g. issues with Zoom or submitting assignments). Later in the fall, I was given permission from the instructor to interview students over Zoom in order to learn more about students'

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[3] See Appendix B for a copy of the online survey.

experiences with online language learning. This call for interviews also allowed me to speak with three participants.

Another method includes my observation and subsequent thematic analysis of the transcripts from two online synchronous webinars offered on YouTube during the summer of 2020. The webinars were facilitated by Rising Voices,[4] with the support of the Canadian Embassy in Mexico. They presented online conversations focused on how Indigenous communities in Mexico and Canada have been using technology and the Internet as tools for language promotion and revitalization. The webinars also probed the question of what the future holds for Indigenous languages online in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. I watched the webinars in real time, took notes, and then used the transcription feature offered by YouTube to produce transcripts once the videos were posted online. This thesis will include contributions of panelists involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada, which highlight various experiences with and approaches to language work during the pandemic.

Finally, I collected tweets pertaining to any form of Indigenous language revitalization or promotion in Canada from March 1 – November 1, 2020. The resulting corpus of 758 tweets collected during this time period emphasizes the many ways that Twitter users are using this social media platform to share and promote Indigenous languages throughout

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[4] Rising Voices (an extension of Global Voices) is an outreach initiative which works with Indigenous and minoritized language communities around the world by providing training, funding, resources, and mentoring with specific focus on participatory media tools for language revitalization (Rising Voices 2021).

the pandemic. The tweets share pedagogical information about Indigenous languages as well as many resources and opportunities to facilitate learning from a distance.

1.4 « Overview of the Thesis »

This thesis combines multiple methods which, together, provide different vantage points to people's experiences with Indigenous language revitalization activities during COVID. Each method provides added dimension to the challenge of answering the research questions posed earlier. While I aim to emphasize language life, Chapter 2 provides necessary context of Indigenous languages in Canada—highlighting how the policies and practices of settler colonialism actively threaten Indigenous (language) vitalities. By tracing historical and ongoing inequities of Indigenous Peoples in the settler Canadian state, I give examples of how Indigenous Peoples in Canada face exacerbated challenges in everyday life and in their language revitalization efforts, especially during the COVID pandemic. I point out, for example, that inequitable access to fast, reliable Internet and updated technology hampers and precludes many Indigenous Peoples from accessing language revitalization activities that have transitioned to online methods during the pandemic. Chapter 3 enters into the transitions that people have had to make in their roles in Indigenous language revitalization. With an overarching theme of online synchronous technology for continued language work, I weave together the experiences of panelists and survey and interview participants to compare and emphasize the many changes and challenges faced by Indigenous language practitioners as well as their adaptive strategies during the pandemic. This chapter addresses people's perspectives on what it feels like to be "together" in online communities of practice—pointing to the ability of online

technologies to connect many people across vast distances, yet also suggests that there are some things that cannot be replicated or simulated online. In Chapter 4, I delve further into the possibilities of online communities when I analyze tweets about Indigenous language work during COVID. Through the frame of performance, I explore how Twitter users make use of the multimodal capacities of Twitter in order to share and teach Indigenous language content with multiple audiences. Twitter is a site where many Indigenous language revitalization efforts are performed within tweets and it also functions as a point of entry—directing people to resources and opportunities, including links to online classes and sharing information about COVID-19. I conclude by reflecting on the lessons learned, such as the affordances and limitations of technology for language revitalization efforts, including the strictures of its access and full potential. I highlight the importance of exchange and interaction of resources and advice among local and global communities of practice. Reflecting on emergent vitalities (Perley 2011) throughout the pandemic, I pose questions about the future of online language work and consider the possibilities of technology-mediated tools and how, or if, they might work in conjunction with the eventual return to in-person activities.

1.5   « Positionality and Limitations »

As I mentioned earlier, I am a non-Indigenous person. I am a woman of European descent and the majority of my ancestors (French and Irish) settled in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral lands of the Mi'kmaq. Prior to this thesis, I started to learn more about Indigenous Peoples and languages during my undergraduate training at Western through courses in Anthropology, Linguistics, and Indigenous Studies. I grew up with almost all

white peers and educators throughout the entirety of my elementary and high school education in a Catholic school board in London, Ontario. Before university, my education involved little to no curricula regarding colonialism nor Indigenous issues. I am grateful to my peers and instructors throughout my university years and people at Twatati for their patience and for taking their time to teach me about what Canada really is and my privilege within this settler state. Learning about the violent realities of settler colonialism and my role within this reality is how I began to enter the study of people involved in the teaching and promotion of Indigenous languages. Through my studies, I began to learn about the many ways that people are working to reclaim their languages and I wanted to continue learning beyond my undergraduate classes. My responsibility of learning about my positionality is ongoing and I will continue to learn more from Indigenous Peoples. With some understanding of my positionality, I acknowledge what this thesis can and cannot do. I intend for this thesis to provide context to Indigenous language revitalization efforts in Canada—both broadly and specifically during the pandemic; to identify how people have been navigating the challenges of remote Indigenous language teaching, learning, and promotion by developing adaptive strategies; and to highlight some of the opportunities for technology-mediated tools for Indigenous language revitalization during and beyond pandemic conditions. This thesis is not, however, meant to be a guidebook of how to do language work online. I am in no way an authority in this area. I have no say in what is necessary for Indigenous communities. Instead, I hope that this thesis serves as a collection of people's experiences with Indigenous language work during COVID and what they have identified as the tools and strategies necessary for maintaining and reinvigorating language life. Throughout this

project, I have learned from people involved in Indigenous language revitalization that

working toward language life has not only continued during COVID, but has picked up

tremendous momentum.

Chapter 2

2 « Bringing Existing Issues into Focus: (Language) Policies and Pandemic Impacts on Indigenous Peoples in Canada during the COVID-19 Pandemic »

In this chapter, I contextualize Indigenous language revitalization in Canada during COVID-19. I provide a brief background of the policies and practices of Canadian colonialism aimed at the systematic eradication of Indigenous languages, cultures, and communities. Indigenous language revitalization is the frame through which I explore various inequities and pandemic impacts on Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Historical and ongoing social, political, and health-related inequities have created the conditions for disproportionate harm to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit during the COVID-19 pandemic in particular. In addition, digital inequities relating to differential Internet access and speed across Canada are complicating factors affecting Indigenous language revitalization since online methods have increased in use during COVID-19. By tracing these intersections, I highlight that the continuance or onset of language revitalization efforts during the pandemic are compounded and complicated by the reproduction of these inequities. In other words, directing focus on Indigenous language revitalization in Canada during COVID-19 necessitates a critical review of existing issues that uniquely affect the everyday lives of Indigenous Peoples before and, particularly, during the pandemic.

2.1 « Canadian Colonialism and a History of Policies Affecting Indigenous Peoples and Languages »

The precarity of Indigenous languages in Canada is directly linked to the policies and practices of settler colonialism.

> [T]he loss of Aboriginal languages was not a product of Aboriginal indifference to their languages, but the result of systematic efforts by governments to discourage their use … The present state of affairs is bleak testimony to the efficacy of those policies. This reality generates special duties on governments to help undo what they have done" (MacMillan 1998, 185).

The *Constitution Act, 1867* assigned the federal government jurisdiction over "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians[5]" (TRC & Fontaine 2016, xvii). Later in 1876, the *Indian Act* consolidated earlier legislation that both defined and limited First Nations life in Canada (*ibid.*). The *Indian Act* became the basis for the implementation of the Indian residential school system. Churches and governments in Canada (including Indian agents[6] and police[7]) are responsible for the damaging outcomes to Indigenous language vitalities. As Galley frankly states: "one way of getting rid of a language is to get rid of all the speakers" (2009, 243). This was the motivation of governments in Canada and churches from the 1830s until the late 1990s[8] wherein an estimated 150 000 Indigenous children were removed and separated from their families and communities to attend

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[5] I acknowledge that this term is pejorative. It is only used in direct quotations and in reference to the *Indian Act*.

[6] In 1894, an amendment to the *Indian Act* allowed Indian agents to send children to residential schools if they deemed parents "unfit or unwilling to provide for the child's education" (TRC & Fontaine 2016, xvii).

[7] In 1933, an amendment to the *Indian Act* appointed all Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers as truant officers (TRC & Fontaine 2016, xviii).

[8] The Qu'Appelle residential school closed in Saskatchewan in 1998 (TRC & Fontaine 2016, xx).

residential schools (Government of Canada 2021f). The Mohawk Institute, the oldest residential school in Brantford, Ontario, began taking boarders[9] in 1834 (TRC & Fontaine 2016, xvii). While the *Indian Act* and its residential school legislation was originally concerned with First Nations specifically, Indian Affairs minister Clifford Sifton issued instruction in 1899 that allowed Métis children to be enrolled in residential schools, with the opening of the first residential school in 1903 for Métis children in Saint-Paul-des-Métis, in what is now Alberta (*ibid.*). In addition, in 1939 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Inuit were "Indians" under Canadian law, with the opening of Chesterfield Inlet in Nunavut for Inuit children in 1951 (TRC & Fontaine 2016, xviii; Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada 2021).

In Canada, legislation has been a vehicle for sanctioned discrimination. Most residential schools were mainly run by churches (United Church, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Mennonite, and non-denominational) that played a key role in the effort to rid Indigenous Peoples in Canada of their linguistic and cultural practices (Galley 2009, 243; TRC & Fontaine 2016). Violent practices in residential schools included the forced changing of children's names, clothing, hairstyles, religious practices, and languages (Meek 2010, 5). Indigenous children's garments, religious practices, and languages were replaced with those deemed by adult educators to be more appropriate and conducive for future "success", which in Canadian residential schools meant English- or French-only language policies (*ibid.*). As Archibald, an Indigenous studies scholar from Stó:lō First Nation, writes: "Aboriginal languages and hence our

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[9] Boarders is the terminology used in the chronology of residential schools in TRC & Fontaine 2016.

forms of orality (oral tradition in practice), were prohibited in residential schools"
(Archibald 2008, 14). The colonial project of removal and dispossession in residential
schools was characterized by a forced Western worldview, including Western literacy,
values, and ways of thinking (*ibid.*). Echoing this account in her ethnography about
Navajo language shift, House (2002) provides additional accounts from people who
survived boarding schools.[10] These contributions include the removal of names that were
replaced with numbers and the traumas of family separation and various forms of abuse
that included Anglo-Christian indoctrination that denounced Navajo belief systems and
medicine men as "evil" (House 2002, 61-64). Federal policies engendered the traumas of
residential schools, which have a continued proliferation through the generations
(Archibald 2008, 14).

Enfranchisement—another policy incorporated into the *Indian Act* in 1876—was "the
primary legal vehicle for regulating Indian identity in Canada … [and] was a critical
move in the erasure of Indianness" (Meek 2010, 5). Enfranchisement is a legal process
for terminating a person's Indian Status and conferring Canadian citizenship (Crey 2009).
This legal process involved people who gave up their Status by choice and for the much
larger number of Indigenous women who lost Status automatically upon marrying non-
Status men (McCardle 2014). Loss of Status meant women and her children would lose
access to reserve land and band resources, loss of band membership, and loss of Indian
Status rights (Wilson 2018). Meek (2010, 5) argues that enfranchisement has played a
central role in the erasure of Indigeneity, including ruptures to Indigenous languages and

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[10] The term "boarding school" is used here to reflect the wording in the US.

cultures. A student I spoke with described their[11] mother's experience with loss of Status

and how it contributed to cultural loss within their family:

> I'm just trying to get back into the Indigenous culture because my mother was
> Indigenous and my father was white … and when she married him way back in
> the day she was abolished from her community so she had to move into a totally
> white community and so she lost her Status and everything so I know her – my
> grandma and mom used to speak [Ojibwe] a little bit but as soon as like – and
> there's six of us children so if anyone of us came into the room where my dad or
> anyone else that was white they would stop immediately because it wasn't an
> accepted thing at the time. So having said that, we've all lost our culture in every
> single way (Interview participant, October 19, 2020).

This excerpt shows the harmful repercussions of racist policies and ideologies, which

have continued reverberations throughout the generations. Taking an Indigenous

language course later in their life is a way to start to "get back" what was taken from

them.

In continuation with policies affecting Indigenous languages, in the late 1940s, the

Canadian government started to formally consult with First Nations peoples when it held

the Special Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on the *Indian Act* in order to

respond to pressure from church groups and veterans' organizations that emphasized the

poor conditions on reserves (Galley 2009, 245). These hearings led to the 1951

amendment of the *Indian Act* (*ibid.*). Like previous versions of the *Indian Act*, this

amendment did not address Indigenous languages; however, it recommended that First

Nations children be educated with non-Indigenous children for the purposes of

integration into Canadian society (*ibid.*). Integration was the key theme of this

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[11] The identities of interview participants (and survey participants in the next chapter) will remain
anonymous. Gender-neutral pronouns (nominative "they" and genitive "their") will be used in citations.

amendment and there was no recognition of the diversity of Indigenous languages nor the need to support them.

The state-sanctioned apprehension of Indigenous children shifted to the widespread practice from the 1960s into the 1980s of child welfare workers removing Indigenous children from their homes and placing them in the care of non-Indigenous foster and adoptive parents (McKenzie et al. 2016, 2). This process emerged as another form of colonization and has been coined as the Sixties Scoop (Johnston 1983). Canada's policies, justice system, and child welfare system are imbued with Euro-Western "ideals", which have been perpetuated by social workers, administrators, lawyers, and judges (McKenzie et al. 2016, 6). While many social workers thought that they were "saving" Indigenous children from poor conditions on reserves, they failed to take into account the long-term effects of separating children from their families and communities, and from their cultural and linguistic practices (*ibid.*, 7). Many people who survived the Sixties Scoop have reported abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual) and neglect in the homes in which they were placed, highlighting the colonial and racist underpinnings of adoptive and foster family relations (*ibid.*).

Even when Indigenous children did not experience abuse or neglect in non-Indigenous homes, many have struggled to come to terms with their Indigenous identities while separated from family and communities who share their background and experiences (*ibid.*). A student in an interview said:

> Well, see I grew up as – I'm a Sixties Scooper. I was adopted and raised in [city omitted]. The school I went to – I was the only visibly Indigenous person in the school. There might've been two other families of different cultures so it was just… I grew up in mainstream society in a French-Italian household so only

> knowing, you know, kind of that and growing up as Roman Catholic. That was my culture … I grew up, you know, as a francophone. I'm a French person. So it wasn't really probably into my twenties when I became a mother and I was like no, like I'm also Indigenous. I have two Indigenous children and they need to know their heritage, their culture, their background and that's when I started doing my own research into who I was (Interview participant, October 20, 2020).

With their experience as a child of the Sixties Scoop, this person describes the complexity of growing up as "a French person" and striving to learn about their identity for their children.

In addition to the onset of the Sixties Scoop, the 1960s were characterized by policies that centred around the erasure of Indigenous languages. The final report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-1967) mentions Indigenous languages as beyond the scope of their mandate since their focus was on the "two founding peoples"—English and French (Galley 2009, 245). The release of the *Hawthorn Report* in 1966, echoing the 1951 version of the *Indian Act*, recommended that First Nations children be educated with non-Indigenous children and there was only one recommendation out of sixty relevant to Indigenous languages (*ibid.*, 245-246). In the context of burgeoning bilingualism and biculturalism of English and French in Canada, there was a continued focus on "integrating" Indigenous Peoples into Canadian society (*ibid.*, 246). In similar fashion, the *White Paper* of 1969 proposed to terminate special rights for First Nations peoples (*ibid.*). In addition to the issues of lack of Indigenous consultation and the threat to lands and reserves, this legislation would have transferred the sole responsibility of language and cultural preservation to Indigenous Peoples alone without any commitment or financial responsibility of the Canadian government (*ibid.*, 246-247). The following year, the *Red Paper* was the official response to and rejection of the *White Paper*, with its central proposal calling for the support of the Canadian

government to ensure the vitality of Indigenous languages (Galley 2009, 247). In response, the federal government began to give partial administrative responsibility to band councils for education in addition to providing financial support to linguistic and cultural preservation over the next several years (*ibid.*, 248). In 1972, the Native Friendship Centres program started to support Indigenous Peoples in urban centres and provide services in Indigenous languages (*ibid.*). By 1975, expenditures increased to $11.3 million, which was directed to Indigenous newspapers, communications societies, and programs aimed at social and cultural development (*ibid.*).

While there was some support in place for Indigenous languages and cultures in the 1970s, the efforts and proposals in the 1980s were largely met with unfavourable responses from the federal government. The Canadian Constitution was repatriated in 1982 and while Section 35 did enshrine existing Indigenous and treaty rights, the meaning of the section was still undefined (*ibid.*, 249). Although the national First Nations, Métis, and Inuit organizations had conferences to discern its meaning, there was no resolution of outstanding constitutional questions (*ibid.*). The national conference on Indigenous language policy held by the Assembly of First Nations in 1988 put forth the resolutions to grant Indigenous languages official status and for the federal government to put Indigenous languages on par with French for financial allocations (*ibid.*). These resolutions were not approved by the Government of Canada; instead, they tabled an *Act Establishing the Canadian Institute of Heritage Languages*, which never came to be (*ibid.*). The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (Bill C-93) of the same year contained sections that could be favourable to Indigenous languages, but failed to place Indigenous languages on

equal footing with English and French (Galley 2009, 249-250). This year also marked the finalization of the Assembly of First Nations' *Proposal for an Aboriginal Languages Policy* and its accompanying *Implementation Policy*, which projected that $15 million would be needed annually and on a long-term basis in order to support language revitalization organizations throughout Canada (*ibid.*, 250). This financial commitment did not happen. Galley highlights the position of the Assembly of First Nations on this issue:

> First Nations being subsumed into the multicultural mosaic of language policy and funding was an option they were unwilling to entertain at the expense of asserting the distinct place of First Nations within Canada (Galley 2009, 250).

This stance was persevered in their 1989 tabling of *Constituting the Foundation for Aboriginal Languages* (Bill C-269), which outlined that the foundation garner additional financing (*ibid.*). Again, the federal government did not advance support for Indigenous languages on a federal level and, instead, continued to advance a political rhetoric of multiculturalism (*ibid.*, 250-251).

Continued advocacy for Indigenous languages in Canada resumed in the 1990s and 2000s. In December 1990, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs released its fourth report, *"You Took my Talk: Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment,"* which advocated for literacy programs offered in Indigenous languages and reiterated that Indigenous languages are "irreplaceable cultural resources" (*ibid.*). Later in 1996, the Liberal government responded to the *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) with *Gathering Strength, Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (*ibid.*, 251). RCAP's 4000-page report essentially argued

for a renewed relationship between First Nations and the federal government and laid out a 20-year agenda for implementing changes to Status and rights issues; although, most recommendations have never been implemented (Galley 2009, 251). *Gathering Strength* outlines various roles for federal departments, including the Department of Canadian Heritage for participation in initiatives relating to language, heritage, and culture (*ibid.*, 252). In June 1998, the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced the creation of a four-year Aboriginal Languages Initiative— aimed at supporting the teaching, protection, and preservation of Indigenous languages at home and in communities (*ibid.*). This initiative provided $20 million over 4 years, which was distributed for First Nations languages, Michif, and Inuit languages—75%, 10%, and 15% respectively (*ibid.*). In the late 1990s, the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement* was ratified and there was a settlement process of legal claims by people who experienced abuse in residential schools (*ibid.*, 252-253). A report was released in 2005 by the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, comprised of representation from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, which proposed a national strategy for the revitalization and promotion of Indigenous languages and cultures within Canada (*ibid.*, 253). While the Task Force was developing this proposal, the Liberal government committed $172.7 million over 11 years, which would have been the largest allocation of funds in Canadian history for Indigenous languages (*ibid.*). However, in December 2006, the new Conservative Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that this promised money would be removed from their budget (*ibid.*).

A component of the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement* is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The TRC was published in 2015 with its defined purpose to, "redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation" with 94 corresponding Calls to Action (TRC 2015a, 1). The Calls to Action are differentiated by two categories: Legacy and Reconciliation (Jewell & Mosby 2020, 6). The former pertains to the ongoing structural inequalities that marginalize Indigenous Peoples in Canadian society (Calls 1-42), whereas the latter involves measures that are meant to advance the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in various parts of society; educate Canadian society about Indigenous Peoples, residential schools, and reconciliation; and establish policies and practices that affirm Indigenous rights (Calls 43-94) (Jewell & Mosby 2020, 6). The Calls to Action 13 to 17 pertain to language and culture, including the acknowledgment that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights (13); the enactment of an Aboriginal Languages Act (14); the appointment of an Aboriginal Languages Commissioner to promote Indigenous languages and advocate for funding (15); the creation of university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages at post-secondary institutions (16); and the official reclamation of names changed by the residential school system (17) (TRC 2015a, 2).

December 15, 2020 marks five years since the release of the TRC's Final Report and, in this time, Canada has largely failed to maintain its promise of reconciliatory actions (Jewell & Mosby 2020, 4). According to the Yellowhead Institute's 2020 report, Canada has only completed 8 of the 94 calls to action—

with 2020 being the first year since 2015 that no additional calls to action were fulfilled (Jewell & Mosby 2020, 4). With particular focus on the calls relating to language and culture, Call to Action 13 (federal acknowledgment of Indigenous language rights) was completed with the *Indigenous Languages Act*—an official recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their respective languages— which received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019 (*ibid.*, 11; Government of Canada 2019a).

A central purpose of the *Indigenous Languages Act* is stated to "provid[e] adequate, sustainable and long-term funding for the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages… [and acknowledges that] Indigenous Peoples are best placed to take the leading role in reclaiming, revitalizing, maintaining and strengthening Indigenous languages" (Government of Canada 2019a). The creation of an Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages is a necessary part in this act and is the fifteenth Call to Action (TRC 2015a, 2). In a news release on December 8, 2020 from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the federal government called for applications to fill the positions of the Commissioner and (up to three) Directors of Indigenous Languages accompanied by descriptions of these roles and an online application process (Government of Canada 2021a). The federal government said it would hold up to 40 virtual consultations with Indigenous Peoples across Canada—including youth, Elders, two-spirited individuals, LGBTQ+ individuals, and individuals with disabilities (Sibley 2020). In-place consultations that started in March 2020 were replaced by virtual consultations later in the year because of the pandemic (*ibid.*). The consultations were designed to collect input on how to implement the *Indigenous Languages Act*, which

included discussions of the appointment of a Commissioner and Directors, as well as how funding can be used to support Indigenous language revitalization sustainably (Sibley 2020). An online questionnaire and submissions by e-mail were additional ways for contributions to be collected. On the Canadian Heritage part of the Government of Canada website, Indigenous Peoples were invited to share input in order to inform the implementation of the Act (*ibid.*). The deadline was on January 22, 2021 (*ibid.*). On June 14, 2021, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Steven Guilbeault, announced the first appointees to the new Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages: Ronald E. Ignace (Commissioner) and three directors: Robert Watt, Georgina Liberty, and Joan Greyeyes (Government of Canada 2021g).

Although the *Indigenous Languages Act* was passed, Call to Action 14[12] has not been fulfilled since funding that reflects the diversity of Indigenous languages is still insufficient or non-existent in many cases (Jewell & Mosby 2020, 11). Without funding, many Indigenous language revitalization efforts are unable to be taken on by language practitioners whose careers are made precarious by insufficient funding to make a living and for benefits and pensions (*ibid.*). A measure of the progress on the TRC's language Calls to Action can be assessed in funding discrepancies between initiatives for Indigenous languages in comparison to those for French. In a recent example from November 2020, the Government of Canada announced that it is providing $10.7 million in funding for a French

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[12] This Call to Action refers to the federal government enacting an Aboriginal Languages Act, which includes the government's responsibility "to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation" (TRC 2015a, 2).

immersion school in Nunavut—a territory wherein Inuit represent 85% of the population and francophones a mere 2% (Jewell & Mosby 2020, 11). The Minister of Economic Development and Official languages, Mélanie Joly, celebrated this investment in her Tweet about "the most northern francophone school in the world," which drew many criticisms from Inuit and Indigenous Peoples more broadly (*ibid.*). Criticisms stem from the historical and ongoing favour given to French language initiatives in Canada, as described earlier, in addition to the reality that there are not currently any Inuktut[13] language immersion schools in Nunavut (*ibid.*). Jewell and Mosby broke down the language funding in the territory and found that $8200 was allocated per French-speaking person and only $186 per Inuktut speaker in 2020 (*ibid.*). In addition to this significant disparity, a bill was passed in November 2020 in the Nunavut legislature that will delay the possibility of a bilingual education system in the territory to 2039 (CBC 2020). Nunavut's original *Education Act* guaranteed bilingual education in Inuktut and English at all grade levels by the 2019-2020 school year; however, amendments were passed that make it so that Inuktut will be phased in as a language of instruction over the next 20 years—meaning that it will take until around 2039 for all students to have Inuktut taught as a first language (CBC 2020).

Promises with unseen fulfilment has been a consistent pattern in Canadian policy pertaining to Indigenous languages. Failure to prioritize Indigenous language maintenance and learning is devastating to Indigenous Peoples seeking to reconnect with their languages. In the last example, delaying Inuktut bilingual education denies children

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[13] Inuktut is the umbrella term for all Inuit languages.

in Nunavut the opportunity to learn Inuktut as a first language, which makes learning it later in life much more difficult, both in terms of acquisition and accessibility to language classes and resources. The French language is favoured in the Canadian context, which can easily be seen through their funding advantages, as described above, compared to Indigenous languages. A hopeful change in policy can be seen in the example of the proposed reform of Canada's Broadcasting Act. In November 2020, the Liberal government introduced Bill C-10, which would require broadcasters in Canada to fund Indigenous productions and to provide content in Indigenous languages (Johnson 2020). Indigenous producers are "cautiously optimistic" because of questions about what counts as an Indigenous production, which languages will be represented, and how long it will take for the promises of this bill to be implemented (*ibid.*). The TRC's 84th Call to Action calls upon the federal government "…to restore and increase funding to the CBC/Radio-Canada, to enable Canada's national public broadcaster to support reconciliation, and to be properly reflective of the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples…" which includes increased Indigenous programming, more job opportunities for Indigenous Peoples, and more dedicated news coverage and online public information resources on Indigenous issues (2015a, 9). Hopefully this new Bill will make productive strides toward the fulfilment of this Call to Action.

In light of recent events in May and June 2021, it is especially important to return to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The 94 Calls to Action include directives pertaining to Missing Children and Burial Information (Calls 71 to 76) and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, which involve collecting all records relevant to residential schools (Calls 77 and 78) (TRC 2015a, 8-9). The TRC's

(2015b) report *Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials* is an effort to record and analyze the deaths at residential schools and to locate cemeteries and unmarked graves of Indigenous children. This report states that "well over 3000 children died while at residential school. It is likely that the majority are buried in school or school-related cemeteries" (TRC 2015b, 125). As known by residential school survivors for generations and documented in this report, thousands of children who attended residential schools never returned home. On May 27, 2021, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation reported findings from a ground-penetrating radar, which indicated the remains of 215 children on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School (CBC News 2021). On June 23, 2021, Cowessess First Nation Chief Cadmus Delorme announced the finding of 751 unmarked graves near the former Marieval Indian Residential School (Eneas 2021). The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN)[14] Chief Bobby Cameron describes this as "a crime against humanity" and reiterates that there are many more children yet to be found (CBC News 2021). On June 30, 2021, the community of ʔaq'am, situated within the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation, located 182 unmarked graves (Martens 2021). There is no denying that the church and state committed genocide. Canada was formed by the genocide and removal of Indigenous Peoples on stolen lands. Genocidal ideologies and policies have continued impacts on Indigenous Peoples. The very law that created residential schools, the *Indian Act*, continues to exist today as it defines Canada's relationship with First Nations (Gabriel 2021).

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[14] The FSIN represents the First Nations in Saskatchewan (CBC News 2021).

Earlier, I outlined a brief history of how colonial policies and practices in Canada are rooted in removal and dispossession. I will continue this chapter by giving examples of how the pandemic has emphasized existing inequities faced by Indigenous Peoples and those who are involved in language revitalization. Next, I will focus on Internet accessibility for Indigenous Peoples in Canada in addition to existing challenges for Indigenous communities that have been exacerbated by COVID.

2.2 « Indigenous Peoples and the Internet in Canada »

Access to high-speed and reliable Internet in Indigenous communities is particularly crucial at the time of this writing because of the shift to online methods for many language revitalization practitioners during the pandemic. In an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19 and in response to government-mandated lockdowns, approximately 4.7 million Canadians transitioned to working from home in addition to many students who transitioned to online learning from home (StatCan 2020). However, limited Internet has been a significant challenge for Indigenous communities. For example, of the First Nations funded by the federal eHealth Infostructure Program (eHIP), all have some Internet connectivity; however, the connections are neither fast nor consistently reliable (Government of Canada 2019b, 13). In recognition of the rural and urban digital divide, the Government of Canada's Connectivity Strategy (2019) has committed to working with Indigenous communities to improve Internet access. The Canadian government committed $1.7 billion in the 2019 Budget to support various initiatives to improve Internet and mobile connectivity (*ibid.*, 11). Part of this commitment is the Universal Broadband Fund, which is designed to fund broadband infrastructure projects in order to

bring high-speed Internet at 50/10 Mbps[15] to rural communities (Government of Canada 2021b). 50/10 Mbps is the Internet download speed identified by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications (CRTC) necessary, "to take advantage of cloud-based software applications, multiple government services (e.g., telehealth services, business support), online learning resources and high definition streaming videos [and] can support use by multiple simultaneous users" (Government of Canada 2019b, 12). In 2019, this goal of 50/10 Mbps was available to 98.6% of the Canadian population in urban households, while broadband availability in rural households and First Nations reserves was only 45.6% and 34.8%, respectively (Government of Canada 2020b, 108). According to the 2016 Census, 38.9% of the Aboriginal[16] population lives in a rural area (StatCan 2017).

Indigenous communities' access to reliable and fast Internet has presented significant challenges and disparities before the pandemic. Canada's Connectivity Strategy (2019) acknowledges that Indigenous communities in Canada face unique connectivity challenges. This report states that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit should not have to move elsewhere because of lacking infrastructure and services necessary to pursue education or work (Government of Canada 2019b, 13). Wemigwans points out that the TRC's (2015a) section of its report, "Media and Reconciliation," omitted any mentions of the Internet

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[15] 50/10 Mbps refers to 50 Megabits per second for downloads and 10 Megabits per second for uploads (Government of Canada 2020b, 104).

[16] "Aboriginal" is the wording used in the Canadian Census. Section 35(2) of Canada's Constitution Act (1982) defined "Aboriginal peoples in Canada" as including, "the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada" (Wilson 2018). "Indigenous" is used synonymously with "Aboriginal" to collectively refer to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (*ibid.*).

(Wemigwans 2018, 6). This missing component is a significant oversight because the Internet is a key method of communication as well as a main tool of disseminating information and knowledge at the grassroots level within and across Indigenous communities (*ibid.*). As I will explain later in this thesis in greater detail, accessibility to fast and consistent Internet has played a crucial role in continuing (or beginning) Indigenous language revitalization activities in virtual form during the COVID-19 pandemic. As highlighted in Canada's Connectivity Strategy, "Access to reliable and affordable connectivity services can enable the revival of Indigenous languages [and] [i]t can allow for distance education…" (Government of Canada 2019b, 23). Without the Internet, digital language revitalization and online activism for Indigenous languages would not be possible.

Building on Wemigwans' (2018) argument that Canada wrongfully excluded Internet in the TRC Final Report (2015), Internet accessibility is a human rights issue more broadly. The UN General Assembly passed a non-binding Resolution in 2016, which declared the Internet as a human right (UNGA 2011). However, the Resolution did not address the responsibilities of governments to provide access to all; instead, the focus was on stopping governments from taking access away (Barry 2020). The Resolution was rooted in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the freedom of expression) and is considered to be a "soft law" rather than a "hard law," which means that nation-states are not penalized for not adhering to it (*ibid.*). The unsteadiness of this UN Resolution has been reiterated and intensified throughout COVID-19. In Greenfield's (2020) words, "[T]o be able to share and receive important information, such as how communities are responding to COVID-19, is both a matter of personal and public health

and safety." Especially during the pandemic, the Internet is a fundamental tool for carrying out language revitalization activities virtually in addition to circulating public health information.

Availability of Internet is one factor, while its cost is another. In Canada, the cost of Internet is highly variable. In the case of students at Antler River Elementary School in Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Internet access is unreliable and expensive (Lamberink 2020). Because of widespread Internet issues, students have been learning through workbooks instead of computers or tablets (*ibid.*). A parent of a student reported that her Internet bill was $200 per month and stated: "We don't get the unlimited package for $60 like [London] does. Ours is limited" (*ibid.*). This example emphasizes the significant cost disparities for Internet in Indigenous communities and the resulting impacts on students who have had to engage in self-directed learning at home without direct and daily instruction. The community's chief, Jacqueline French, has been in contact with the Ontario government about building infrastructure, like a fibre-optic cable network, in order to improve Internet connectivity (*ibid.*). This is one of many examples of the struggle for digital equity in Indigenous communities in Canada. The widespread transition to online learning or work should not be an assumed capability because of inequities in the distribution of resources and access to the Internet, particularly in rural and northern regions in Canada.

2.3 « Pandemic Impacts on Indigenous Peoples and Language Holders in Canada »

In conjunction with inequities of Internet speed, cost, and access in Indigenous communities, the pandemic has uniquely affected Indigenous Peoples in Canada in

various ways. The ongoing impacts of colonization exacerbate the many effects of COVID-19. For many Indigenous communities, there is a wide array of challenges including no clean water for everyday life, precluding handwashing; overcrowded living arrangements, precluding social isolation; and as previously discussed, limited Internet capacity and lack of technological equipment for working or studying at home (Nightbird 2020, 296). Hand sanitizer—a main line of defense against getting COVID-19—is not accessible in many cases because of location or finances (*ibid.*). In addition, Nightbird highlights that the general or "normal" anxiety around getting COVID-19 is intensified for Indigenous Peoples for many of these reasons in addition to triggering the recollection of loss caused by the smallpox and tuberculosis epidemics caused by European settlers (*ibid.*).

The likelihood of contracting COVID-19 is higher among Indigenous Peoples because of many social, economic, and health care inequities (*ibid.*). For example, First Nations comprise around 10% of Manitoba's population but, as of February 2021, accounted for nearly 70% of the province's COVID-19 cases (Hawthorn 2021). At the onset of settler colonialism, thousands of Indigenous Peoples died because of a series of contact epidemics brought by European colonizers (*ibid.*). The 1918 influenza pandemic killed almost one in three Labrador Inuit (*ibid.*). As Europeans occupied Indigenous lands, it became increasingly difficult for Indigenous Peoples to fish, hunt, and grow crops, causing nutritional deficiencies (*ibid.*). These incursions caused crowded living conditions and competition for resources, which brought about decreased resilience against disease because of malnourishment and overcrowded and impoverished living conditions (*ibid.*). Social and environmental conditions like housing, nutrition, and

sanitation play key roles in how a population fares during an outbreak. Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been experiencing disproportionate harms of COVID-19 for the same reasons as historical disease outbreaks brought by Europeans (Hawthorn 2021). Because of colonialism, many Indigenous communities have overcrowded housing, unsafe water, food scarcity, and lacking or inadequate health care (*ibid.*).

In addition, the presence of COVID-19 in vulnerable and high-risk groups can result in more severe outcomes, especially for people over the age of 60 or for those who have underlying health conditions like lung or heart disease, diabetes, or comprised immune systems (Government of Canada 2020c). The United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI) (2019) rates quality of life, life expectancy, and access to basic services like education, housing, and income. In the most recent Human Development Report (2019), Canada's index score was very high at 0.929[17] and ranked 16th internationally. However, many reports and statistics highlight significant overall health and economic disparities between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and the Canadian population. In a study applying the UN's HDI to Registered Indians in Canada comparatively in 2006 and 2016, a major finding was that HDI scores remained higher for other Canadians compared to Registered Indians in both years (Government of Canada 2020d). The following graph depicts this reality:

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[17] In the "Technical notes" for the UN's human development indices, they note: "[m]inimum and maximum values (goalposts) are set in order to transform the indicators [life expectancy, expected and actual years of schooling and GNI per capita] expressed in different units into indices between 0 and 1. These goalposts act as 'the natural zeros' and 'aspirational targets', respectively, from which component indicators are standardized" (UN HDR 2020). In other words, the UN's dimensions of "health, education, and standard of living" are poor at 0 and best at 1 (*ibid.*).
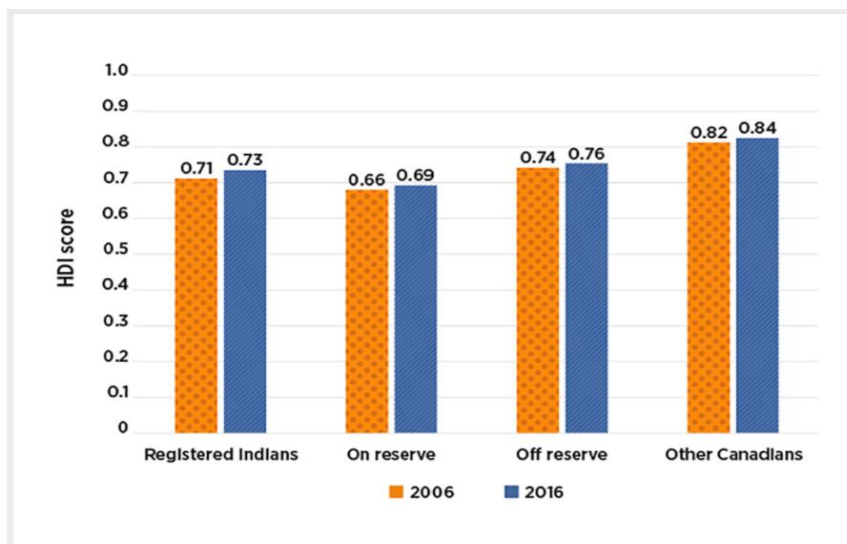
Figure 1. 2006 and 2016 HDI Scores, Registered Indians and Other Canadians. Source: Government of Canada 2020d.

Social and health inequities are present for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in various

areas. For example, rates of diabetes vary between and within groups of First Nations,

Métis, and Inuit. The Public Health Agency of Canada found that the rates of diabetes are

17.2%, 10.3%, and 7.3% for First Nations living on-reserve, First Nations living off-

reserve, and Métis, respectively (Government of Canada 2011). The prevalence of

diabetes for Inuit, in this report, was comparable to the general Canadian population at

5.0% (*ibid.*). In addition, Nunatsiavut[18] has the highest rate of tuberculosis in Canada

(Michelin 2019). The tuberculosis rate among Inuit is 290 times higher than for non-

Indigenous people in Canada (Hogan 2019). In terms of life expectancy, Indigenous

Peoples in Canada live, on average, 5-7 years fewer than non-Indigenous people in

Canada and infant mortality rates are 1.5 times higher among First Nations infants

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[18] The Inuit region of Labrador.

(Assembly of First Nations 2011). First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations face much higher rates of chronic and communicable diseases and are exposed to greater health risks because of poor housing, poor ventilation, contaminated water, limited access to healthy foods, and higher unemployment rates (*ibid.*). In addition, there were approximately 30 000 children in foster care in Canada in 2011; nearly half (14 225) were First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Blackburn 2013). In 2011, 4% of Indigenous children were in foster care, compared to 0.3% of non-Indigenous children (Blackburn 2013). Together, these selected factors also have significant impacts on mental health for Indigenous individuals. Mental health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada are well documented and trace connections to the intergenerational effects of residential schools, forced relocations of communities, and removal of children from families and communities, and gaps in mental health services (King et al. 2009). Studies confirm adverse mental health outcomes stemming from stressors including traumas, childhood adversity, and discrimination (Hackett et al. 2016; Boksa et al. 2015). In a recent study on Indigenous Peoples' mental health during COVID-19, Arriagada and colleagues (2020) found that 6 in 10 Indigenous participants reported that their mental health has worsened since the onset of physical distancing. These data exemplify some of the inequities that interlock with and compound the danger and realities of COVID-19 for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Moving now to the context of Délı̨nę (Northwest Territories), Bayha and Spring (2020) acknowledge additional impacts of COVID-19 on community members. On the one hand, many members of the community have had more time to be immersed in traditional activities and cultural practices because of stay-at-home orders but, on the other hand,

there are many difficulties that are exacerbated by the pandemic (Bayha and Spring 2020,

597). In their words,

> These barriers are the result of decades of colonialism and trauma resulting from forced assimilation and policies that have eroded and interrupted ancient old intergenerational lines of knowledge transfer and flow. This loss of connection to rich histories, knowledge and, most importantly, language and spirituality, has been detrimental to the community's overall health and makes many people in Délı̨nę vulnerable to COVID-19 (*ibid.*).

Adding to this reflection of traumas caused by colonial interventions, I turn to

Nightbird's words that function in response:

> I started to wonder why it has taken this pandemic for others to see that the basics—water, food, employment, and so on—are so fragile or nonexistent. Why … the legacy of colonization continues … the anger resurfaces (2020, 297).

Both of these excerpts reiterate how the ongoing legacy of colonialism compounds the

effects of the pandemic for Indigenous Peoples. In addition, many people have had to

apply for government assistance during the pandemic, such as programs like CERB[19], but

Nightbird describes the complicated feelings that underlie this reliance upon the

government because of the "relationship known to provide the exact opposite" (2020,

297). This reference to the paternalistic relationship between the settler state and

Indigenous Peoples reiterates the intergenerational traumas that have been perpetuated by

the Canadian government and the complicated feelings of taking assistance from a

government that has repeatedly failed Indigenous Peoples.

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[19] CERB stands for Canada Emergency Response Benefit—a temporary stipend created by the Canadian government during COVID-19 for people that lost their jobs because of the pandemic.

Bayha and Spring (2020) reflect on the lessons that have been brought into sharper focus during the pandemic. Although many community members in Délı̨nę have returned home and spent more time with the land and cultural practices during COVID-19, ongoing support by way of resources and programming has been lacking for a long time (*ibid.*). The authors highlight the need for more opportunities, especially for youth, to learn traditional skills and cultural practices and to have improved access to training and mentorship to facilitate the reconnection of land, language, and spirituality (*ibid.*, 597-598). The authors argue that these enhancements are central for the community to work together to address the challenges presented before and during the pandemic:

> In other words, the way forward is to strengthen and preserve the way of being as Dene and remember again how to walk in the footsteps of grandfathers and grandmothers. This is the message from the community's Prophets, Elders, and Ancestors and the very message that has echoed through eternity since the beginning of time: Hold on to your way of life and hold on to the Land and you will have a good life in the future for yourselves and for your children (*ibid.*, 598).

A central part of this message is the importance of learning from Elders to ensure the continuance of the Dene way of life through the generations.

The need to protect language holders has been heightened by the threats and realities of COVID-19. People with native or fluent proficiencies in Indigenous languages, including Elders, play integral roles in language revitalization. Language holders impart cultural and linguistic knowledge, which is invaluable to current and future generations. In Galla's words: "[i]f Indigenous languages are not seen as a resource that has potential to influence all aspects of life, a wealth of knowledge systems and all that is embedded within may be lost" (Galla 2016, 1149). The following graph depicts the number of

people[20] in Canada who use Indigenous languages in terms of age group as well as

contexts of use and acquisition:
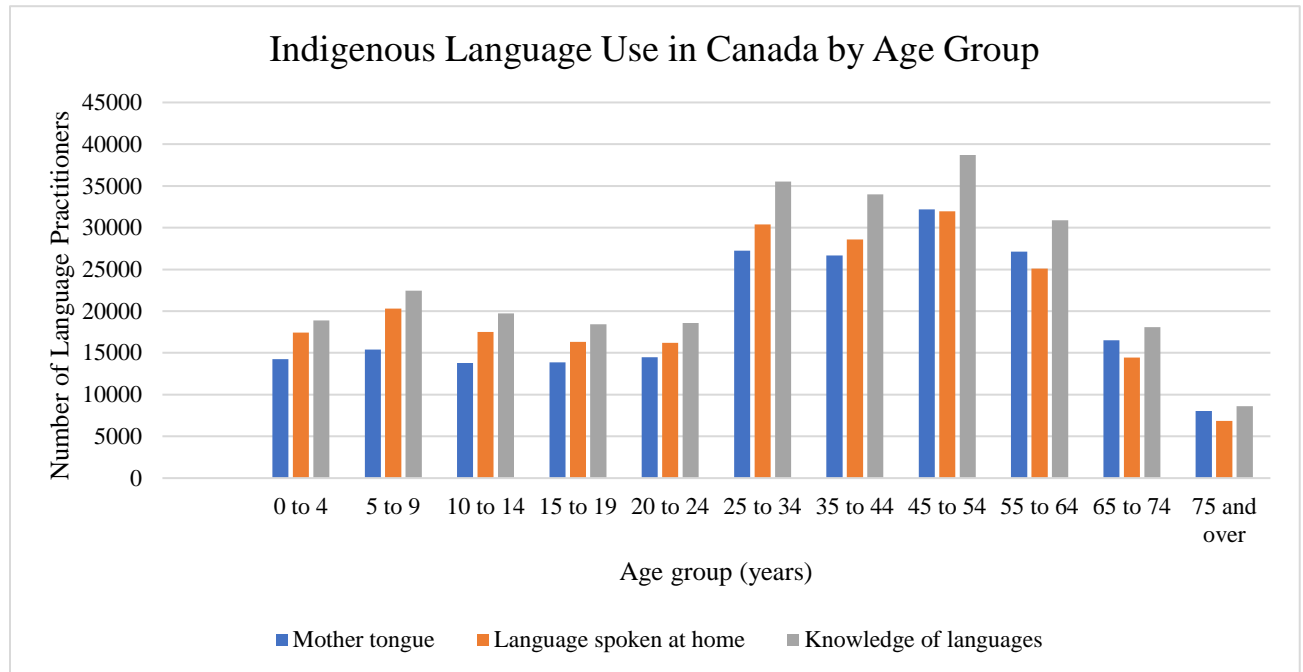
Figure 2. Data adapted to Excel from Canada's 2016 Census. Source: StatCan 2018a.

People ages 45 to 64 have the highest number of people who acquired Indigenous

languages natively (as a mother tongue) (StatCan 2018a). Overall, the highest rates of

language used at home and knowledge of languages is among people ages 25 to 54. Next,

I turn to a graph showing reported COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities by

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[20] People can self-report more than one language in Canada's Census; therefore, these numbers exceed the population count (StatCan 2018a). The 2016 Census of Population estimated that there were 1 673 785 Aboriginal people in Canada, accounting for 4.9% of the total population of Canada (StatCan 2018b).

age[21] in order to compare the ages of people who know and use Indigenous languages
and the ages of the highest cases of COVID-19.

Reported cases in First Nations communities by age group and sex

This chart includes a breakdown of COVID-19 test-positive cases in First Nations communities by age and sex where this data is available.
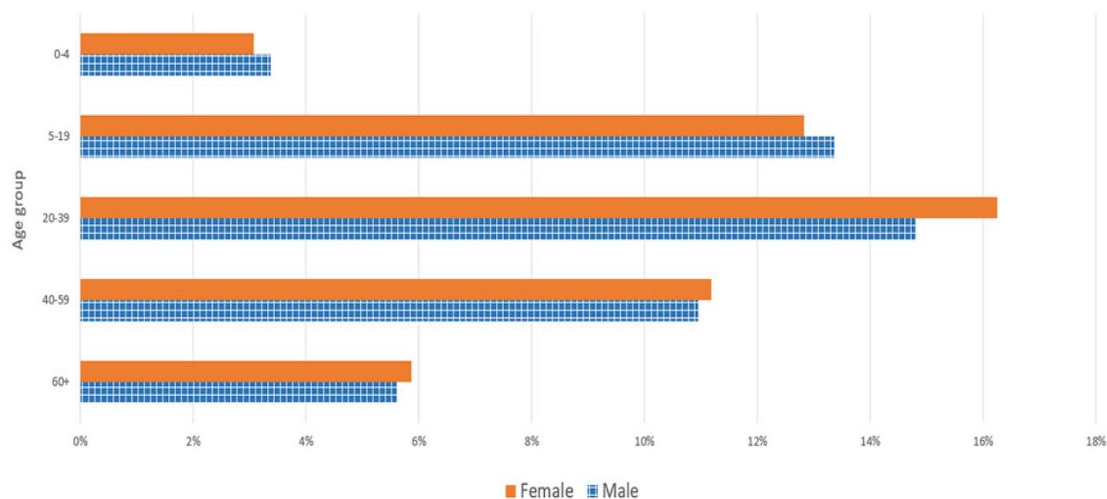
Figure 3. Reported COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities by age group and sex. Source: Government of Canada 2021c. Accessed April 20, 2021.

Figure 3 shows that the highest number of reported COVID-19 cases in First Nations communities, at this particular time, is among people aged 20-39. This age group, according to the 2016 Census, uses Indigenous languages in the home more than any other age group. I refer to these two graphs to highlight the relationship of COVID cases among First Nations communities and Indigenous language use by age group—

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[21] Data is current as of April 27, 2021. The chart shows current trends, so only the most recent 38 weeks are displayed (Government of Canada 2021c).

suggesting the potential impacts that COVID has on continued Indigenous language use and transmission to future generations.

2.4 « Conclusion »

I end this chapter by reflecting on the words of Sol Mamakwa, MPP of Kiiwetinoong, in his speech at Queen's Park on November 2, 2020:

> I am rising this morning to speak on why I cannot stand for the singing of O Canada and God Save the Queen that begins our month here at Queen's Park. I've had a chance to tell many truth telling stories of people of Kiiwetinoong. I tell stories about the children who leave our communities every year at the age of 13 and 14 to attend high school hundreds and hundreds of kilometres away from their families, their language, homes, and their way of life because most of the First Nations in the riding don't have high schools. I've told stories of parents and grandparents who don't get to grow old because they don't have access to healthcare and their homes are filled with mold. I tell stories, Speaker, about young people in their early twenties who lived their whole lives in the communities without access to basic things as clean drinking water. I tell stories of young people who have died by suicide because they felt they had no hope. In those stories, Mr. Speaker, it is clear the promises of Ontario and Canada that are celebrated in anthems and written down in Treaties are not being met. Ontario was built on the foundation of Treaties 9, 5, 3, the Robinson Treaties, the Haldimand Tract and others that cover what is now Ontario. And so, I will not stand in this legislature and acknowledge these anthems until our people are treated equitably and our children have access to education, clean water and safe housing. And to my colleagues, I will stand when your governments honour these Treaties they have signed. Until then I will keep fighting for the future my ancestors imagined when they signed Treaty No. 9, knowing their spirits are with me as I work for the people of Kiiwetinoong and those who live in Ontario. *Kitchi meegwetch.*

Mamakwa's speech emphasizes the many failings of governments in Canada, which continue to perpetuate structural inequities. Cycles of disconnection and separation continue, involving families, languages, and Indigenous Peoples' access to basic necessities like clean water, safe and affordable housing, health care and mental health resources. Mamakwa's words highlight the unfulfilled promises of governments in

Canada, including broken Treaty agreements. Refusal to stand for "God Save the Queen" and "O Canada" is a powerful stance to denounce the failings of the Canadian state in its relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

The structural inequities faced by Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. I started this chapter by delineating the history of (language) policies in Canada up to present day. Federal acknowledgment of Indigenous language rights did not come until 2019. The reality that Indigenous languages need to be revitalized stems directly from violent colonial policies and practices by churches and governments in Canada. Indigenous Peoples' relationships to land, language, and culture have been targeted by the colonial state. The connections between language and well-being have been identified by scholars like Walsh who traces correlations between language revitalization in Indigenous communities and positive health outcomes (2018, 6). Oster and colleagues (2014) found that reduced levels of diabetes correlate with the use of First Nations languages in Alberta. Additionally, Chandler and Lalonde (2008) demonstrate a strong correlation between knowledge of First Nations languages and a lower incidence of Indigenous youth suicide. More research is needed on the relationship between Indigenous language revitalization and well-being. For now, it is clear that the health and well-being of Indigenous Peoples as well as Indigenous language revitalization efforts are central to decolonization. Sustainable language revitalization efforts are compromised, or even rendered impossible, if the bare minimum requirements for living in Indigenous communities are not being met first. These requirements are inclusive of access to the necessities of safe and healthy living, which include fast,

reliable, and fairly priced Internet connection necessary for daily life and language revitalization efforts.

In this chapter, I emphasized Canada's policies and the TRC's reports relating to Indigenous languages, in particular. However, the ongoing search for unmarked graves continues to demand a more holistic look at the intersections of racist policies and institutional culpabilities. In Gabriel's words:

> The residential schools are a central part of the history that helped shape Canada and its provinces. Every child should know this history. It's not just systemic racism that we must try to tackle together; we must expose and uproot the racist norm upon which this country was founded (Gabriel 2021).

Long overdue, this exposure of the truth is beginning to unfold. At the time of this writing, churches are refusing to release their records on residential schools and the TRC's (2015a, 7) "Church Apologies and Reconciliation" Calls to Action (58 to 61) remain unfulfilled. Additionally, part of the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement* was for the Catholic Church, an institution worth billions of dollars, to pay $25 million in order to provide support for survivors (Warick 2021). Not only was most of that money never raised, but church officials hired a top Canadian lawyer who successfully argued that the country's Catholic churches had "tried their best and had no more to give" (*ibid.*). It remains to be seen how, or if, government and religious institutions in Canada will begin to redress the atrocities of their making.

Chapter 3

3 « The Transition to Indigenous Language Teaching and Learning from a Distance: Changes, Challenges, and Strategies of Continuance »

This chapter will include excerpts from people involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada during COVID-19 from an online survey, virtual interviews, and online webinars. Because of physical distancing measures in addition to institutional- and community-based lockdowns and border closures throughout COVID-19, the transition to online methods for Indigenous language revitalization efforts has been very widespread in Canada. In some of the examples I will present, technology has had to play a more dominant, rather than complementary, role to facilitate revitalization efforts. Together, these experiences will emphasize what participants characterize as the changes and challenges that accompany the widespread shift to teaching, learning, and promoting Indigenous languages online.

The dissemination of an online survey in English made through Qualtrics was a research method that was safe for participants. This survey was open to anyone over the age of 18 involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada. The questions mainly focus on the comparison of language revitalization before and during COVID-19, which include mainly open-ended questions with text boxes and some rating questions. The survey design was adapted from Pérez Báez and colleagues' (2019) global survey in their mixed methods approach aimed at learning more about language revitalization practices around the world. I circulated the survey both by sharing the survey link on social media (specifically, by colleagues sharing on Facebook and retweeting on Twitter). The survey

prompted participants to describe their roles in and experiences with language revitalization before COVID-19; how language revitalization is going overall during COVID-19 (if it had continued); the modifications in method(s) to account for safety measures in language work; comparative target language use (before and during COVID-19); and experiences with and access to technology.

The three virtual semi-structured interviews involve my conversations with students in a university-level Indigenous language course where they told me about their experiences learning an Indigenous language online during COVID-19. I asked the students various questions, including why they took the course, what makes language learning enjoyable and effective for them, and their experiences with online language learning—including what is working well and what is presenting challenges.

Finally, I will include excerpts from four panelists from Canada who participated in the Rising Voices webinars on YouTube in July 2020. There were two webinars and each included four panelists, with two people from Mexico and two people from Canada. These online conversations focused on how Indigenous communities in Mexico and Canada have been using technology and the Internet as tools for language promotion and revitalization. The webinars also addressed the question of what the future holds for Indigenous languages online in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinars were synchronous with live translation in English and Spanish. I will be citing panelists' words in this chapter because their experiences as Indigenous language practitioners and advocates highlight various approaches to Indigenous language work in Canada during COVID-19. The panelists' names will be used because of the videos' public availability

online. However, the identities of the people involved in the survey and interviews will remain anonymous.

To this end, I turn to Buszard-Welcher's suggestion that the Internet can facilitate, "virtual speech communities, a constructed immersion setting where members of the speech community meet, interact, and communicate in the native language," with an acknowledgement that, "the Web is no substitute for the complex face-to-face interaction that takes place among speakers in a real community" (2001, 342-343). The central questions that I will explore in this chapter stem from Buszard-Welcher's comment on the role of technology in language revitalization work: "As new technologies develop and more people access and use the Web to do more things, the importance of the Web in *creating and maintaining community* can only grow" (2001, 343; emphasis mine). In the context of a widespread shift to online methods for language work during COVID-19, I have posed the following questions: what possibilities do Internet-facilitated language revitalization activities engender? What is lost or gained through online Indigenous language teaching, learning, and promotion? Is there a sense of community in online Indigenous language communities of practice? Contributions from the survey, interviews, and webinars include varied opinions on the sense of community in virtual language revitalization contexts. Some people describe its absence in online contexts, while others suggest that synchronous language gatherings can still manage to work in terms of getting people together to learn and use a language. Together, this array of contributions from people involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada will identify both the challenges and realities of online language work as well as the strategies that

participants and panelists described as supporting their experiences with language revitalization efforts during the pandemic.

3.1 « Language Revitalization and Technology »

This chapter will begin with a brief review of literature that highlights the role that technology has played and continues to play in language revitalization. Reviewing existing intersections between technology and Indigenous language revitalization will help to contextualize the adaptive approaches to language reclamation in Canada during COVID-19. Technology encompasses a wide array of artifacts, methods, systems, tools, and practices, all of which range from low- to high-end advancements (Zhao 2003). In their use with Indigenous languages, some of these technologies include, "wax cylinder recordings to digital audio recordings, e-mail to chat, video recordings to interactive audio video conferencing, and/or surfing the Internet to play interactive computer games" (Galla 2009, 173). As Galla explains:

> Indigenous Peoples have the opportunity to engage with digital tools to supplement language documentation, revitalization, promotion, and education efforts. Furthermore, as existing technologies are reinvented and new technologies emerge, additional domains for language use surface (2016, 1138).

The goal of creating more domains for language use has been a very important, yet difficult, goal for many technology-oriented language revitalization efforts. For example, the Burt Lake (Cheboiganing) Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians created a multimedia Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) community-based dictionary project, involving audio, video, transcription, and images in the dictionary entries (DeKorne et al. 2009). Despite the collaboration of community members on this project, this multimedia

dictionary remains a largely passive tool since users are limited to navigating the entries without having a formal progression to guide the learner to acquire the language (DeKorne et al. 2009, 150). Shifting to a case in Labrador, linguists worked with a public school language teacher to make a story database for second language learners of Inuttitut[22] (Dicker et al. 2009). While accessibility to expensive equipment for recording the stories and access to adequate computer facilities are limitations of this initiative, Dicker and colleagues explain that the students enjoy the interactive nature of the database—hearing the stories and learning about how the language works, morphologically and syntactically (*ibid.*, 165). In another example, a native speaker and linguist worked together to collect Blackfoot lullabies to use as tools for language teaching and learning (Miyashita and Crow Shoe 2009). Rainey and Larsen (2002) found that learners memorize words better when sung in a melody. Based on this finding that songs can be useful tools for word and phrase memorization, the native speaker and linguist recorded and transcribed Blackfoot Elders singing Blackfoot lullabies. The recordings were put on CDs with a corresponding information sheet with English translations and were disseminated to young parents of infants, college students, and other adult learners with the hope that "these phrases in the lyrics will live inside and outside of the songs and be a part of revitalizing the Blackfoot language" (Miyashita and Crow Shoe 2009, 187-188). In these examples, it is evident that both merits and challenges accompany technological intersections with language revitalization efforts.

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[22] This is an alternate spelling for Inuktitut.

Some of these challenges combine issues of political will and pedagogical realities.

Wemigwans describes how participants she worked with said that they would like to see

more Indigenous language resources online; however, they found that virtual Indigenous

language resources lacked the coordination for comprehensive language learning that

bridges beginner, intermediate, and advanced learners (2018, 113-114). Wemigwans

connects this paucity in resources and pedagogical rigor to "a lack of political will to

support Indigenous language campaigns," a central argument made in the previous

chapter (*ibid.*, 114). Wemigwans argues that emerging online resources must be

developed to address language-learning gaps and in order to accomplish this goal, there

needs to be political support and adequate funding for resource and curriculum

development (*ibid.*). Jacey Firth-Hagen, a Rising Voices panelist, commented on this lack

of support for Indigenous languages:

> Our language speakers have been underpaid for decades. Make it so we can make
> our livelihoods for language revitalization. Make it so our Elders can make a
> proper living … stop underfunding Indigenous languages … In Canada, [the
> difference in] the amount of funding that Indigenous languages get compared to
> the French language is astronomical (July 30, 2020).

In conjunction with support and funding, Indigenous languages must not continue to be

omitted from the digital landscape (Bali 2020). Bali argues that technology must act as a

bridge, not a barrier (*ibid.*). It is crucial for Indigenous communities of practice to be

equipped with the finances, tools, and training necessary to build new and inclusive

technologies that are culturally and linguistically relevant (Galla 2016). Gerry Lawson, a

Rising Voices panelist, sums up this point:

> We've always been resilient. We've always been creative. The technology gap is
> shortening, I believe, at least in Canada, but we need to invest in all of the
> technologies and we need to invest in language teachers … It's not an either or for

> me. It's not a menu choice … I would like to point out that Zoom made themselves free during the COVID crisis, but we don't know what it's going to cost to keep doing this once this crisis ends … a lot of us have become really dependent on Zoom, so I think advocacy is a big thing for us right now in starting to look at these digital tools, look at what they cost, and trying to tell people to ethically make these things free to Indigenous language teachers long-term forever. I mean, that to me is the big thing… (Lawson, July 16, 2020).

Elliott reiterates the importance of expanding free and open source tools—highlighting that most language revitalization contexts work within a tight budget (2021, 303). Free technological tools, or tools with free versions, can be valuable in these settings when they are adapted to local contexts (*ibid.*). For example, Elliott suggests that tools like Microsoft Word and audio editing programs, which cost money, can be replaced with free tools like Google Docs and Audacity (a free, open source audio editor) (*ibid.*).

Although there are various challenges entangled with the development of online language resources, the Internet has been instrumental in connecting Indigenous language learners with each other and to language media. Digital technology and the Internet facilitate the movement of Indigenous languages across borders and has extended them to new domains, both geographically and digitally, allowing enhanced accessibility to Indigenous language learners (Galla 2018, 109). Davis describes how ethnolinguistic definitions of Chickasaw identity consider diasporic Chickasaws "central members of the Chickasaw Nation if they possess a connection to or knowledge of the Chickasaw language" (2018, 129). Davis articulates how language media bridge the gap between Chickasaws "at home" and in diaspora by allowing linguistically-defined core membership to extend beyond the Chickasaw Nation's geographic borders (*ibid.*). Early Chickasaw language media took the form of mainly paper-based language materials like flashcards, word searches, and pages for colouring books, which were distributed at

community events in the early 2000s (Davis 2018, 130-133). The Chickasaw Nation's

evolution to new language media includes a partnership with Rosetta Stone to create

language-learning software, a Chickasaw language application, and an online language

website (*ibid.*, 134). Davis acknowledges that these enhancements in technology (or "new

media") for language revitalization are directly linked to economic growth that increased

resources dedicated to language revitalization; in particular, financial approval for

external projects to produce new language media (*ibid.*, 133). Davis' connection of

finances to updates in technology for language revitalization reiterates Wemigwans'

(2018) stance above regarding money necessary for effective online language resources.

Upgrades in technology for language revitalization more easily allow people across vast

geographical spaces and time zones to have access to language resources and virtual

gatherings, which raises the notion of community of practice. Eckert and McConnell-

Ginet define a community of practice as:

> … an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an
> endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power
> relations—in short, practices—emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As a
> social construct, a community of practice is different from the traditional
> community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and
> by the practice in which that membership engages (1992, 464).

Building on this definition, Wenger's (1998) three main criteria for identifying a

community of practice are (1) mutual engagement, (2) a joint enterprise, and (3) a shared

repertoire (73). Together, this definition and characteristics of communities of practice

help to illustrate "the emergent nature of communities and the inseparability of language

from actual social contexts" (Ahearn 2017, 133). Additionally, the idea of a community

of practice does not necessitate a community defined by a location or a population;

rather, the focus is placed on people coming together to engage for a shared purpose (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1998, 490). This notion is fitting because of the emergent and pressing need to switch to online methods and gatherings for language revitalization during the pandemic and the increased aggregation of people coming together for this purpose. As previously defined as my objectives for this chapter, I will direct focus on the "community" component of community of practice—taking a closer look at what this means for people involved in Indigenous language revitalization in online spaces.

In the following sections, I will explore how "new media" (Davis 2018, 133) have created significant changes, challenges, and, in some cases, benefits for various communities of practice of Indigenous language practitioners in Canada during the pandemic. The prevalence of video-conferencing technology—a dominant form of new media used during COVID-19—has been integral in the facilitation of online Indigenous language revitalization. In this context, Davis' (2018) point that new language revitalization media facilitate connections between Indigenous language learners "at home" or in the diaspora is particularly compelling. This framing is useful in the sense that people in the upcoming examples are logging on for a common purpose— language—from near and far.

3.2 « Changes and Transitions »

Participants described significant changes to language revitalization initiatives before and during COVID-19. The panelists and survey and interview participants have been involved in various transitions to safe and remote language teaching and learning. For example, the university-level Indigenous language course, before 2020-2021, had never

been offered online. Before the pandemic, students learned the language in an interactive, small classroom environment. During COVID-19, students logged onto Zoom twice a week from September 2020 – April 2021. The instructor screen-shared written content for the classes in addition to the students repeating after them to practice the language. When I helped the instructor with the transition to online course delivery, I better understood all of the work involved in this process. I set up the online learning management system and coordinated the synchronous classes, which I found to be a learning curve and a time-consuming process for someone learning how to post and organize content. Additionally, the shift to online methods appeared, at times, to be difficult for the instructor and some students. I found that it took some time for people to become more comfortable with this method.

In another example, a survey participant involved in Oneida language revitalization as a student stated that the language classes, which were in person six hours per day, were going well before the pandemic. After the onset of the pandemic, the participant described their use of the target language as decreasing. During the pandemic, the participant indicated that their use of Oneida shifted to online language revitalization classes and games, but no further information was provided. In both cases, connection to the languages during COVID-19 has had to be sought using online tools.

Another survey participant who is involved in Cree language revitalization as "direct staff, student, and [a] planner," facilitated "cultural events, informal language classes (no structured lessons plans)," stated that these efforts were going well before the pandemic. They indicated that revitalization or community contexts were sites of their practice of Cree before the pandemic, adding context about their pre-pandemic language use:

> Only when discussing the language with other planners or speakers. Sometimes I would study vocab on my own, but not often (Survey participant).

In addition, they wrote about their experience with changing to online methods during the pandemic. In their words:

> We actually re-designed the whole Cree program during COVID-19 (moving all classes online and designing lesson plans), which has resulted in increased participation. We have 2-hour evening classes via Zoom once a week. It is difficult to find times/dates that work for majority of the class. Ideally, we would offer classes 3x per week (Survey participant).

The restructuring of the Cree program to an online model is reaching more people than usual, even if the coordination of meetings is challenging. In addition, the participant characterized language revitalization as going very well during COVID, as further exemplified here:

> We have more participants and interest than ever. I believe hosting classes online has actually been beneficial overall to the program. Several other students have commented on how accessible classes are via Zoom. We have received interest from local school boards and support from our local Friendship Centre as well (Survey participant).

The increased participation and accessibility to Zoom language classes is framed as beneficial to the continuance of this community-based language revitalization initiative. The participant's exposure to and use of Cree increased during COVID-19, including in the following domains:

> Social media, instant messaging, in class, in office/work (while planning), at home with family, telephone with friends (Survey participant).

Another survey participant described their role as a digital language revitalization activist and social media content creator for Gwich'in and they identified their pre-COVID efforts as "language teaching, content creation, [and] sharing language teaching

materials," which they described as going very well. They reported no change in their

target language use—that is, making an effort to use Gwich'in every day. Additionally,

this participant indicated that social media remained as the context of target language use

both before and during the pandemic as well.

Changes to language revitalization have affected variations in both the frequencies and

contexts of target language use. The following table summarizes a comparison of the

three aforementioned participants' target language use before and during COVID-19:

Table 1. Comparative Target Language Use Before and During COVID among Survey Participants

	Before COVID-19	During COVID-19
Participant involved in Oneida language revitalization	"Daily"	"3 x a wk"
Participant involved in Cree language revitalization	"Not as much as I would have liked! I didn't know any other learners before this program (which started around the time of COVID)."	"Every day. The other language planner and I try to use the language when we are in the office together (even if it is only a few words). I try to practice vocabulary on my own every night."
Participant involved in Gwich'in language revitalization	"I try to everyday"	"I try to everyday"

Target language use clearly varies for each person. The use of the target language since

the onset of the pandemic is, in part, affected by the (changing) domains of use. These

three accounts exemplify the diversity of transitions made by Indigenous language

practitioners during COVID-19. The variation in target language use is shaped by the various factors and challenges that are affecting each language revitalization initiative the participants described. These experiences offer an initial glimpse into the imposed changes made throughout the pandemic in order to continue language work. In the next section, I elaborate on the difficulties that accompany these transitions.

3.3 « Difficulties and Challenges »

The participants described varied experiences and challenges with the adjustments to language revitalization during the pandemic. Some language revitalization efforts have not been able to continue at all because of COVID-19. This situation is exemplified in the response from a survey participant who wrote that, "we don't have anything happening at this time because of lack of funding… [with] no funding to pay teachers." As mentioned earlier in this thesis, inadequate or non-existing funding has been a consistent challenge for Indigenous language revitalization. In another example from the survey, a person listed "language revitalization burn out and care" and "lack of capacity" as difficulties and barriers during the pandemic. Regarding the continuance of language revitalization, the participant wrote that it was "still the same. More breaks or more content." This person identified themselves as a content creator and social media activist for language revitalization. In their case, there is an ongoing need to balance the pressure of producing language content with the need to take breaks.

In line with this person's mention of pressure, I noticed an emergent theme of people describing feelings of stress as I read the transcripts and survey responses. For example, a survey participant wrote that the threat of becoming infected with COVID-19 has been

cause for stress. In their words, "you can never be sure who people have been in contact with so it makes it a scary situation to be back in class." Even in this case where language classes stopped, the idea of returning to the classroom is described fearfully. The overarching fear of sickness and death seriously complicates language revitalization during the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, stress stems from various concerns. Lawson (Rising Voices), highlights the stress felt by Indigenous language teachers, particularly during the pandemic:

> When it [the pandemic] first hit and when people had to socially isolate, it was a big hit because almost all strategies were based around getting people together first, building community and teaching that way … We all are following some model of trying to communicate and when that's interrupted we have to scramble, so I'm seeing a lot of stress and tension to the people who have to teach (Lawson, July 16, 2020).

Here, Lawson describes the importance of getting people together for language revitalization activities and the stress associated with the sudden pivot of methods of teaching and communicating, more generally. This point of transition in communicative and pedagogical interaction also marks a transition in what community-building means when people cannot gather together in-person. In order to explore this meaning more, I now turn to perspectives of university students in the Indigenous language course. When I asked one student if they felt they knew the instructor and their classmates well, they responded:

> No, I don't really feel like I know my classmates or the instructor very well. I think sometimes when you get to class a little early [before COVID-19], for example, … you'd get some time to chat or if there were assignments, we could work on it together or something like that, which none of that really happens so I don't really feel like I've gotten the opportunity to become friends with anyone in my class (Interview participant, October 21, 2020).

This student's contrast of classmate interactions before and during the pandemic

emphasizes feelings of isolation that can be associated with remote learning. Another

student commented on the medium of Zoom used for instruction:

> I think on Zoom you feel a little … I don't know, I think we're all a little shyer for
> some reason. I don't know. I feel pressured I guess. We're only in class for two
> hours and we're trying to get as much content as possible (Interview participant,
> October 20, 2020).

Earlier, Lawson emphasized the tension experienced by teachers. Here, it is clear that

students are experiencing pressure as well. This student articulates an urgency to

understand all of the content built into short classes. In addition, Zoom, at times, can be

an awkward substitute for in-person classes. A student adds to the difficulties of Zoom

and the frustration of being unable to meet with instructors in-person:

> I think it's just an extra layer of friction to try and have to set up a Zoom call and
> then kind of make sure I don't have any other Zoom calls at the same time … I
> think in-person it's a lot easier to just say oh I'm walking past [the instructor's]
> building right now and I have a free moment and I should just pop in (Interview
> participant, October 21, 2020).

While new media, like video-conferencing technology, can be extremely useful for

keeping people connected throughout the pandemic, it can be experienced as unnatural

and inconvenient, as this student told me. For instance, a student said that they feel they

are "being intrusive" if they want to pose a question to the instructor on Zoom because

they fear they are interrupting them or taking up class time (Interview participant,

October 19, 2020). The reality for many students is that they spend multiple hours on

Zoom every week for classes, which can lead to burnout. For example, Western

University, along with most Canadian universities and colleges, shifted to online delivery

for the majority of courses (around 70%) for the 2020-2021 school year. As this student

said to me, there is a disconnect between student and instructor as well, which can be difficult to navigate.

For other language revitalization initiatives, meeting regularly to learn and use the language together is much more difficult to coordinate than regularly scheduled university classes. A survey participant who is involved in a community-based Cree language revitalization initiative identified "consistency in attendees" as a challenge for Zoom meetings because classes are in the evenings and some people cannot commit because of other responsibilities. The participant also points out a limitation of Zoom:

> Hosting virtual classes makes some of the activities and lessons more difficult to execute (e.g. activities such as cooking together in the language) (Survey participant).

Language learning happens primarily in real-life situations, like cooking together, which is a main principle of the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (Hinton 2001, 217-218). This program pairs together a "master" (speaker) with an "apprentice" (language learner) intensively in order to promote conversational proficiency (*ibid.*). While Zoom is the new media avenue through which this community of practice comes together to learn Cree, the hands-on learning that happens in everyday practice (in person) is missing. The participant highlights that recreating activities and lessons is difficult, if not impossible, to execute using virtual methods.

In tandem with the difficulties and challenges of language revitalization described by participants and panelists, there is also a recurring theme of longing for pre-pandemic contexts and methods. Returning to the past is a narrative commonly present in language revitalization literature. For example, Romaine highlights that, "… many language

activists do hark back to an imagined glorious past where their language was vibrant…"

(Romaine 2006, 446). Similarly, Davis describes: "language reclamation looks to the past

in order to understand the present and to imagine radical linguistic futures" (2018, 148).

However, in this case, the return to the past in the upcoming examples refers to a very

recent past—the pre-COVID world. For example, a student explained:

> I'm really missing the tutorial aspect of the university … just coming in and
> having conversations face-to-face with other people. I attend class, I participate as
> much as I can, but it's that comradery, you know, being able to kind of meet and
> mingle and discuss with your classmates—that whole portion is missing for sure
> (Interview participant, October 20, 2020).

These words echo the disconnect felt within the relationships among students and the

instructor. This student mentioned the void of in-person social interaction and comradery

almost immediately in our conversation. Similarly, Dr. Belinda Daniels, a Rising Voices

panelist who is involved in Cree language revitalization, describes a limitation of

technology in language revitalization:

> Technology can never replace our speakers. Our people who have the language …
> when we're in a face-to-face context, we embody the language. The gathering of
> people themselves create a mood. They create an energy, a synergy amongst us so
> technology cannot tap into that and that's what is most missed… (Daniels, July
> 16, 2020).

Feelings of togetherness that accompany in-person gatherings in a community of practice

cannot be captured quite the same virtually, according to Daniels. Returning for a

moment to Wenger's criteria for a community of practice: mutual engagement, a joint

enterprise, and a shared repertoire—by this definition, learning an Indigenous language

remotely with synchronous instruction has these characteristics (1998, 73). However,

these perspectives emphasize some discomfort with online learning and a lack of social

connectedness with peers. In other words, people's experiences within a community of

practice are shaped by many factors, such as the mediums of collaboration and an

ongoing comparison of how things were before this shift to online learning. The

university students indicated that joining a Zoom meeting for class did not feel the same

as in-person classes they experienced before the pandemic. When I asked about any

challenges of learning an Indigenous language online, a student said:

> … not being able to really hear out the nuances of the pronunciation because it is unique to me at least in terms of accent and pronunciation and where to put stresses and Zoom doesn't really transfer that very easily … [also] just having a sense of community or maybe people to just like repeat a word with in the hall— on the way to the lecture or on the way out of the lecture—like wait, can you just say that word that [the instructor] said that last minute again? Like that kind of stuff, yeah (Interview participant, October 21, 2020).

Online language classes affect both social and pedagogical dynamics of learning for the

students I spoke with. In the context of Kaska language revitalization, Meek describes

moments of disjuncture, defined as:

> [t]he everyday points of discontinuity and contradiction—between social or linguistic groups, within discourses, practices, or between them, even between indexical orders—that interrupt the flow of action, communication, or thought (2010, x).

The shift to learning an Indigenous language online, then, is a disjuncture. Although

classes are able to continue in an online format, the students describe an interruption to

social interactions and learning. Post-secondary institutions' expectation for the

continuance of learning made possible by online tools is complicated by the actual

experiences of students enrolled during COVID-19 who, as cited above, are not finding

the learning experience to be the same as before. In the last example, deciphering

linguistic nuances like pronunciation and stress on a Zoom call can be more challenging,

whereas listening in a classroom setting can be more ideal in terms of acoustics and

opportunities for student clarification, in addition to a sense of community cultivated in

the classroom. Longing for the ways things were before the pandemic, in the various

examples here described, signifies temporal and methodological disjunctures between a

language revitalization before that focused on "getting people together first," as Lawson

put it, and a language revitalization that is striving for continuance online in the midst of

a crisis.

3.4 « Accessibility and Support »

With these difficulties and technological caveats in mind, panelists described various

perspectives on access to and use of technology. As highlighted in the previous chapter,

Internet access and speed greatly varies across Canada. Firth-Hagen (Rising Voices)

reiterates that, "technology can be expensive and not accessible to many" (July 30, 2020).

Lawson (Rising Voices) offers an additional perspective on this issue:

> Within Canada, I think we're a little bit better off technology-wise than a lot of
> places. We still have bandwidth problems in our smaller communities, but most
> people have phones and most people have mobile and I think that people are
> gravitating towards things like Facebook and WhatsApp and things that are
> available on mobile platforms (July 16, 2020).

This perspective offers more context to accessibility of technology in Canada. From the

online surveys, I found that participants mostly answered with "somewhat agree" and

"strongly agree" when rating their reliable access to Internet. The survey participants had

similar answers when rating their access to the devices necessary for online language

revitalization activities. It is important to point out that these responses are expected since

this survey was online only. Therefore, people without access to the Internet or devices,

of course, could not access nor answer the survey questions. Moreover, Lawson indicates

that mobile phones are key tools for facilitating people's connection to each other and to their languages. Notably, Lawson observes that he is, "seeing more daily conversational communication and questions about language on [his] Facebook feed that [he] didn't see before COVID" (July 16, 2020). The Internet, specifically social media platforms, has become integral to community-building for speakers of minoritized languages (Belmar and Glass 2019, 7). These sites facilitate minoritized language use in environments where they have been excluded previously, while having the benefit of attracting young people who are essential in language revitalization initiatives (*ibid.*). As I will explore in the next chapter, Twitter is a central platform for Indigenous language promotion and revitalization, particularly throughout the pandemic.

Another factor affecting people's experiences with virtual language learning during the pandemic is digital literacy, or the necessary skill set to use technology. One of the students I interviewed described themselves as a mature student and told me about their difficulties adjusting to online learning. When I asked this student how the school year was going with the transition to online, they replied:

> I just dropped two of my courses because I'm having such difficulty with just doing things on the computer. Whereas most people would take five minutes, it takes me like two hours! (laughs) Just because I have to find out where everything is, try it, and then if it doesn't work try something else … so it's been a bit of a difficult time (Interview participant, October 19, 2020).

Discomfort with technology has impacted this person's experience as a student not only this school year, but possibly beyond since they had to drop two courses. In addition, I went on to ask about how they were finding the assignments. When explaining struggles with an assignment early in the semester, the student said:

> I was lost. My son … he's not a computer guy. He knows what to do on the computer, but when I asked him, he was like 'oh sorry … I don't know any of that stuff' … so I really have no one to ask (Interview participant, October 19, 2020).

This example highlights the need for additional support for post-secondary students who have to take online classes. Additionally, this student's experience suggests that the ramifications of this pandemic school year might extend into the future in terms of graduation and plans for the future. Despite these challenges, this student is learning to adjust to online learning. It is important to recognize these major transitions:

> Acknowledge the language teachers and people who aren't necessarily used to technology, which a lot of our language teachers aren't … the resilience is amazing within our language teaching and learning communities (Lawson, July 16, 2020).

3.5 « Exchange and Interaction »

While participants and panelists describe limitations and difficulties with technological methods for language revitalization, the increased uptake of online methods has facilitated interaction and exchange within and between communities of practice. As Galla highlights,

> [s]ynchronous technology allows a community of practice—who may not be situated in the same region, land, or time zone—to gather and correspond in real time. Along with traditional domains of language use, Indigenous languages can be experienced in digital and virtual domains that offer an immersive experience and a reconnection to the land where the language resides (2018, 109).

As Davis (2018) describes in the case of Chickasaw language use beyond tribal borders, Galla (2018) reiterates that synchronous technology is able to connect people with each other in real time who may be geographically distant. This is the case for the students I spoke with in the Indigenous language course since they were all learning from different

cities in Canada. In another example, Dr. Daniels (Rising Voices) describes another

purpose of synchronous gatherings:

> We now have this collaborated massive prayer that we do Monday nights at 9:00 PM Saskatchewan time and so it doesn't matter where we are on Turtle Island, we all pray at the same time to the nêhiyawêwin language spirit and so I've seen this as a trend happening during COVID especially and praying to the language spirit that our languages flourish, that the language spirit comes back into our homes and communities (Daniels, July 16, 2020).

Online gatherings facilitate safe connections during COVID-19. Because of the

accessibility of online meetings, there is increased participation in some cases, including

Dr. Daniels' experience with Cree language revitalization:

> We have had to move from face-to-face language classes to online since March [2020] … we've been able to adjust our language classes, our language gatherings, into online learning, which has been really successful. We have way more—maybe double, triple—the numbers of people wanting to learn Cree or come back to the language of Cree online and it is because we have to make the time. We're sitting at home and this is an opportunity to sit and learn Cree. It's free. It's available … it's not a pen-and-paper language class. We are connecting online in real life time. We also record the classes so students can go back and listen and re-listen to the recording… (Daniels, July 16, 2020).

This initiative hosts a virtual, immersive environment using a learn-from-home model.

This community of practice is using time in quarantine to stay connected to their

language and to one another. Access to recordings creates more flexibility for those who

are unable to join the meetings. Synchronous technology helps to facilitate language

revitalization initiatives themselves as well as the exchange of experiences and advice

among communities of practice, as exemplified in the conversations among panelists

from Mexico and Canada in the Rising Voices webinars. For example,

> We look for ideas from other First Nations groups in Canada who are in a similar situation as we are in terms of having low numbers of speakers but are very vibrant on social media and also in terms of offering different possibilities over

the Internet … [considering] what potential is there to involve digital activism and alliances with public institutions and other organizations (Lawson, July 16, 2020).

These conversations emphasize the potential benefits of exchanging ideas and approaches to Indigenous and minoritized language revitalization and promotion. In fact, I recorded in my observational notes that the webinar on July 16, 2020 had 147 viewers from 33 countries. Additionally, panelists and viewers interacted through the chat feature on YouTube to share their experiences and resources in real time. These contexts of exchange among communities of practice during the pandemic allow for distanced and safe collaboration on a much larger, global scale.

3.6 « Strategies of Continuance »

Participants' strategies for continued learning throughout the pandemic exemplify collaboration and exchange on a more interpersonal, intimate level. For example, a student of the Indigenous language course told me that they share the language they are learning with their family:

> I have my son that moved back home … for me, it's a definite bonus, so I use [the language] on him sometimes and then he asks me like, 'is that the right way to say it?' And 'what does that mean?' And so it's fun in that way and I'm kind of exposing him as well to, you know, a little bit of Indigenous culture (Interview participant, October 19, 2020).

Another student told me that sharing their knowledge of this language and culture will help them in their role as an educator:

> I find that there's really a lack of distinguishing between Indigenous cultures and Indigenous languages because it's so pan-Indigenized in elementary school. I found [I was] being asked a lot of different questions and things that I didn't know that I couldn't really specifically speak to … I can talk from the Anishinaabe perspective, right? So I thought it was important for me to learn some of the [other Indigenous languages and cultures in Canada]. I think it's just

important to understand that … Indigenous Peoples are so diverse in Canada and they're so distinct and being able to understand that [will] help you teach it a little better… (Interview participant, October 20, 2020).

In addition to sharing the language within their families and careers, students also told me about strategies that they discovered were helpful in support of their online language learning. All of the students said that having access to class recordings has been helpful because they can go back and listen to how the instructor pronounces the words. A student said that the recordings help them:

I need to go back and … write it out and I need to be able to see it in front of me and I've been doing cue cards and doing the best I can to try to memorize some of the new language (Interview participant, October 20, 2020).

Someone else found that the access to recordings has been a helpful learning tool to use in between classes:

… when I'm in my car and I go out to the reserve to get, you know, gas and so it's like a half an hour out there and back. I put it [the recording] on the speakers in my car … or … like sometimes my daughter will call and she'll need a ride somewhere so I'll go pick her up and while I'm waiting or whatever … I listen to it in my car, my stereo. So all the time I'm listening… (Interview participant, October 19, 2020).

Overall, the students I spoke with had various ways of adapting to online learning and finding creative ways to learn and connect with the language, including sharing it with their families and learning so that they can share their acquired knowledge with students and other people in their lives.

3.7 « Conclusion »

The experiences of people involved in Indigenous language revitalization described in this chapter contribute insights to the many changes and challenges of adapting to

activities that can be done safely and remotely during the pandemic. The various accounts highlight the transitions that people involved in Indigenous language revitalization efforts in Canada have had to make in response to the threats and realities of the rapid spread of COVID-19. If the efforts were able to continue, some of the obstacles the panelists and participants face include both the social and pedagogical limitations of technology-mediated language work, but also the underlying issues of financial support and accessibility that make these online methods possible in the first place. Changes to and cancellation of Indigenous language revitalization activities have produced disruptions and disjunctures (Meek 2010) in many people's lives. However, undoubtedly, technology-mediated language work has been an integral facet of new media (Davis 2018) that has facilitated the continuation and commencement of Indigenous language revitalization efforts across Canada.

The heterogeneity of experiences highlighted in this chapter point to complementary uses of technology for language work, which can help to overcome particular challenges. Many people cited in this chapter identify synchronous technology as a tool that allows people to get together across vast geographical areas and time zones for a collective purpose. For those with Internet access, synchronous technology and access to recordings has allowed many people to continue or start Indigenous language learning from home. The panelists and participants describe many examples of adjustments and pathways for (continued) Indigenous language teaching, learning, and promotion throughout the pandemic. For example, interactive, online conversations about Indigenous languages, such as those offered by Rising Voices, help to facilitate exchanges among people involved in language revitalization in various global contexts. These complementary uses

of technology reiterate the need for consistent and reliable Internet access in addition to continued and long-term access to learning tools like Zoom, which are fundamental to technology-mediated language work. From my experience with supporting the Indigenous language course behind the scenes, I learned from students that there are practices worth preserving in the future. All of the students told me that continuous access to class recordings was helpful as they learned a new language. Being able to go back, listen, and review the content can be extremely useful for students and this is a practice that instructors should continue in the future. In addition, I recommend that university departments consider appointing a graduate student or upper-year undergraduate student to serve as a technology support employee. This role would help students struggling with technology to seek support and have their questions answered promptly, especially in cases where classes do not have Teaching Assistants. These recommendations support student success and institutional language revitalization initiatives. Additionally, I highlight in the next chapter that Twitter is another technological tool for Indigenous language revitalization. Technology cannot be solely relied on; however, it can be helpful to overcome challenges such as long periods of social isolation.

Returning to the initial question I posed about the meaning of "community" in community of practice, panelists and participants have shared various perspectives on this issue, including its absence and quasi-presence in online language revitalization efforts. The questions I posed in the survey and interviews did not directly ask about community, but I gathered and compared participants' and panelists' comments surrounding adjustments to online methods to probe this question. I must also acknowledge my

limitations in understanding community as a non-Indigenous researcher. I cannot assume a shared understanding of this concept, particularly when reviewing experiences of people of various ethnolinguistic identities across Canada. For this chapter, I highlighted people's comments concerning ideas of, for example, togetherness and comradery, but I acknowledge that I am unable to give a full reading of community because of my positionality. With this understanding, I noticed that some of the students, for instance, did not report feeling a sense of comradery in their online classes, while others indicated that online tools allowed them to connect with others across vast distances with increased levels of participation.

Although many people cited in this chapter have indicated that technology cannot exactly replicate in-person language revitalization efforts, many people have still created and participated in many, what I have called, strategies of continuance, including making use of archived language materials and sharing language with people in their lives. I hope the excerpts of people's experiences in this chapter can help to promote further inquiry into Indigenous language revitalization in online contexts. Future research could explore the evolutions of online communities of practice for Indigenous languages, as well as how technology-mediated language revitalization efforts might complement in-person activities. I look forward to learning more about these future directions and possible intersections.

Chapter 4

4 « Indigenous Language Revitalization in Canada on Twitter during COVID-19 »

In the last chapter, I emphasized Davis' discussion of new media, which encompasses a

number of media types that mainly operate through digital technology, such as the

Internet and smartphones (2018, 133). New media's intersection with language

revitalization also denotes an aspect of novelty in that these media can be seen as

"emergent or evolving formats that bring language into new domains of use and

circulation" (*ibid.*). Building on this discussion of new media and language revitalization,

Logan (2010) refers to new media as an interactive, computer-native media wherein users

are active content producers. New media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and

Facebook offer domains for language learning and places for language revitalization

movements to thrive through social media content production aimed at language

acquisition and use. For this project, I collected tweets during an eight-month period of

the COVID-19 pandemic in order to learn more about Indigenous language revitalization

efforts in Canada during this time. I focused solely on Twitter because of its public

availability and I did not collect tweets that were on private accounts. I will explain more

about the data collection process and privacy considerations below. In this chapter, I will

explore how Twitter users in Canada are using this new media platform to jumpstart or

continue Indigenous language revitalization efforts remotely and safely during the

pandemic. By looking at examples of new media-facilitated language revitalization

efforts, including Indigenous language words of the day and sharing resources and

opportunities for Indigenous language learning, I will discuss how Twitter is a site of

performance for linguistic and cultural practices and serves as a place for what Belmar and Glass (2019) call "virtual breathing spaces" for minoritized languages. I will highlight how Indigenous language use on Twitter intersects with discourses of activism relating to Indigenous languages and other social issues. Hashtags also serve as a tool for Twitter users to classify and organize the content of their posts, which can facilitate connections among people involved in similar efforts. Finally, I will highlight some of the challenges of and opportunities for Indigenous language revitalization on new media platforms, including issues of access to technology, technological support, privacy, sustainability, and minoritized language visibility.

4.1 « Data Collection and Thematic Analysis »

Twitter is a social networking site that is often referred to as "microblogging" (Cocq 2015; Zappavigna 2012) because of the 280[23]-character limit of "tweets" (short messages) that can be "tweeted" (sent) via the Internet and smartphones. As of February 2021, Twitter has 353 million monthly active users and 192 million daily active users (Dean 2021). Unlike Facebook where users have to approve friends that "follow" them (i.e. friend requests), Twitter users can follow each other without a request process, although it is possible to set up private Twitter accounts and to block followers. By default, tweets are public and Twitter users can only see who follow them, not who reads the tweets. As this chapter will explore, tweets have many functions but, mainly, they are focused on information-sharing and communicating with other Twitter users. These

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[23] The tweet character limit increased from 140 to 280 characters in 2017 (Boot et al. 2019).

characteristics define the participatory nature of Twitter. A common use of the site is to embed links to other webpages, pictures, videos, or longer messages (Cocq 2015, 276). (Re)tweeting and replying are some of the interactive features of Twitter that also serve as ways to assess the popularity of the tweet or its author (*ibid.*).

I collected English-language tweets about Indigenous language revitalization in Canada during the March 1 to November 1, 2020 period of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to learn more about the various online forms that Indigenous language teaching, learning, and promotion were taking during this time period. Zappavigna describes the nature of microblogging sites as episodic—with Twitter users frequently sharing and updating information to a networked audience (2012, 18). Since microblogging posts, like Twitter, are organized in reverse chronological order, tweets can serve as corpora for analyzing time-sensitive text of the kinds of online talk happening at a particular time (*ibid.*). In other words, looking at tweets about Indigenous languages in Canada in this time frame provides a snapshot of how people were talking about this topic online during the first eight months of the pandemic. Any form of Indigenous language revitalization or promotion in Canada during this time period was collected for analysis. I referenced the Endangered Language Project's list of Indigenous languages in Canada, which provides various spellings, diacritics, and writing systems of 73 Indigenous languages in Canada (ELP 2021). This list guided my periodic Twitter searches, which I did, roughly, every week. The main Twitter search I used was "[name(s) of the language] AND "language" since: 2020-03-01. Some additional searches include iterations of this search including different words for language revitalization such as language preservation, maintenance, and reclamation. I searched some hashtags, including: #Indigenouslanguage(s) and

#coronavirus (or COVID, COVID-19). As I will discuss later, I discovered additional

hashtags as I collected data during this time period. Since my focus was limited to

Canada, I did my best to limit the collected tweets to Indigenous language revitalization

efforts based in Canada. I found that most Twitter accounts include location, which

helped me to collect tweets from Twitter users in Canada. For example, the Gwich'in

language is used across the colonial boundaries of Canada and the US. For this research, I

excluded tweets that were US-based (e.g. a Gwich'in word of the day from an Alaska-

based Twitter account). Of course, I cannot be sure that all of the tweets I found are

Canada-based as some Twitter accounts do not specify location. I collected the tweets by

using NCapture, an Internet browser extension which allowed me to tag and collect the

tweets in a folder, which I imported to NVivo®[24] to prepare for analysis. However, when

I entered the stage of data analysis, I found that Excel was a better tool for coding

because it more clearly organized the data (in written form, rather than screen-captured

images of the tweets). I used Excel for coding languages, language families (if

applicable), month that the tweets were published, and themes.

At the end of the data collection period, I had 758 tweets.[25] During the process of data

collection and analysis, I noticed recurring themes throughout the Twitter corpus. The

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[24] NVivo® is a qualitative data analysis computer software package which helps researchers to organize their data in advance of analysis.

[25] See Appendix C for a list of Indigenous languages, dialects, and their frequencies in the Twitter corpus. Tweets are organized by language family (or grouped separately if languages are isolates) and this organization reflects the linguistic organization found in the Language Highlight Tables from the 2016 Census (StatCan 2018c). The various spellings, diacritics, and use of non-Latin scripts (e.g. syllabics) for languages and dialects in this Appendix reflect the Endangered Language Project's (ELP 2021) list of Indigenous languages in Canada that informed my Twitter searches.

following table lists these themes and their frequencies.[26] Some tweets contained more than one theme;[27] therefore, the frequencies below collectively exceed the total number of tweets in the data set. Now, I will explain and exemplify each Twitter theme.

Table 2. Twitter Themes: Descriptions, Examples, and Frequencies

Theme	Description of Theme	Example	Frequency in Corpus
Resource/Art creation or sharing	Tweets contain language resources and/or pieces of art that have been recirculated or newly created (e.g. apps, language portals, videos, songs, pictures).	The Inuktitut alphabet song! #inuktitut #alphbet [sic] #inuit #music #Learningathome [video of song originally attached] (Twitter, Inuktitut, May 2020).	466
Hashtag presence	Tweets contain the use of one or more hashtags (#) about Indigenous language revitalization in Canada.	Pxḷáux̌v - It is sunny #Haíɫzaqv #heiltsuk #speakyourlanguage [pronunciation video originally attached] (Twitter, Heiltsuk, October 2020).	302
Online or distanced language classes	Tweets promote virtual or socially distanced Indigenous language classes or gatherings.	Free Inuktitut lessons online! [institution omitted] is offering free classes via Facebook Live, May 25 - Sept. 20, 6:30-7:30pm Mon, Wed. & Thursdays. Contact [email omitted] Watch 1st class here: [link	133

[26] Many tweets contain more than one Indigenous language or dialect within a single tweet. For example, a tweet from March 2020 promotes resources for both Cree and Blackfoot.

[27] The average number of themes present per tweet is 2.13.

		omitted] #inuit #language #inuktitut #urbaninuit (Twitter, Inuktitut, May 2020).	
Language and culture	Tweets explicitly address how Indigenous languages intersect with culture and identity.	[TV network name omitted] channels combined broadcast more than 50 hours a week of programming in a variety of Indigenous languages. Our languages connect us to our ancestors and culture. They're the foundation of our identity. But if we stop speaking them, we could lose them forever (Twitter, Indigenous languages in Canada, May 2020).	86
Innovations	All forms of Indigenous language revitalization are innovative. These tweets include emergent forms of language revitalization activities during the pandemic beyond online classes (e.g. chatrooms, contests, podcasts, online chatrooms).	Learning language through whispers: Indigenous youth launch ASMR campaign [article originally attached] (Twitter, Indigenous languages in Canada, July 2020).	76
Indigenous words of the day	Tweets include an Indigenous word, phrase, or sentence, followed by an English translation.	#Algonquin Word of the Day - Wàwìyezi / Full moon #AWOTD #KitiganZibi (Twitter, Algonquin, October 2020).	68
Health promotion	Tweets contain information about health promotion for	Everyone needs access to COVID-19 information they can	46

	COVID-19 (e.g. handwashing, social distancing) involving Indigenous languages	understand! We've compiled a list of reliable health info in 366+ languages, especially Indigenous and under-resourced languages. We hope this list will help keep you and your communities healthy: [link omitted] (Twitter, Indigenous languages in Canada, April 2020).	
Opportunities for funding, training, or work relating to Indigenous languages	Tweets offer information about opportunities for funding, training, or employment relating to Indigenous languages.	FPCC is focused to support Indigenous communities operating under #COVID19 measures. We have compiled a list of info and funding resources to help you through these challenging times. Link to resources: [link omitted]. (Twitter, Indigenous languages in Canada, April 2020).	45
COVID affecting Indigenous languages/practitioners	Tweets refer to how COVID is affecting Indigenous languages, learners, communities, programs.	Amongst all the other reasons to #FlattenTheCurve, the protection of #IndigenousLanguages cannot be forgotten (Twitter, Indigenous languages in Canada, March 2020).	32

This table briefly shows how I categorized the tweets in the corpus. Since these tweets

are in English but contain pedagogical information about Indigenous languages, I also

wanted to see how often Indigenous languages are actually used in the tweets. Here is an

example of an Indigenous language being mentioned in a tweet:

> Learning Potawatomi has never been easier! Check out our self-paced online
> language courses and more at [website omitted] (Twitter, Potawatomi, July 2020).

In contrast, the following tweet contains an Indigenous language in use:

> Binojiinhyag bigiziwag jiigabiik. The children are swimming at the beach
> (Twitter, Ojibwe, July 2020).

I coded for Indigenous language use in the tweets and found that 357 of the 758 tweets

(47.1% of the corpus) contained one or more Indigenous languages in use, as exemplified

in the latter tweet. Many of the tweets in the upcoming sections will show this use. This

chapter will focus on a selection of the Twitter themes, including Indigenous words of the

day, online classes, the sharing or recirculation of Indigenous language resources, and

hashtags.

I copied and pasted the text from the tweets into Excel cells, where I coded for

language(s), language family, month that the tweets were published, and theme(s). I

omitted emojis[28] since Excel does not support them and emojis are not at the centre of my

analysis. My concern is the content of the tweets; although, an analysis of stylistic

choices made by Twitter users could be interesting to explore in the future. Texts in the

tweets were kept as is in terms of capitalization, spelling, and spaces except for a few

examples presented in this chapter where I add [sic] for non-standard and unconventional

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[28] The only exception of emoji inclusion is in tweet 7, where the emoji (described in parentheses) is
necessary for interpreting the tweet.

spellings. None of the tweets I collected contained bolding or italicization, so there were not any tweets that were altered in this way either. However, any identifying pieces of information in the tweets (e.g. names of people, institutions, Zoom IDs, emails) are omitted in this thesis. I will explain the privacy considerations in the next section. In addition, for my own organization as I collected the tweets, I indicated when there was an attachment of a picture, video, piece of art, or something else that was not text-based by adding a note at the end of the tweets in Excel, such as "[pronunciation video attached]", which I did in purple font. This helped me keep track of tweets that contained embedded resources so that I could retrieve them quickly when it came time for analysis and the research write-up. As previewed in the examples of the Twitter themes above, in this chapter I will be citing the tweets by using the text-based tweets from the corpus, excluding personal information. The tweets cited in this chapter will include parenthetical notes that I have added to indicate when embedded resources were originally attached to tweets. I will cite the tweets as deriving from the Twitter platform and I will attribute the tweets by published month and languages referenced.

This process of data collection and analysis has limitations. The limited time period of data collection only covers a portion of the pandemic which, at the time of this writing, is still ongoing. For example, the data collection period ended before the onset of the vaccine rollout in Canada; therefore, the tweets do not contain references to vaccines, their procurement and distribution, nor how this process has affected Indigenous language practitioners in Canada. This area could be a focus of future research. In addition, I was the only researcher searching, collecting, and analyzing the tweets. A team-based approach likely could have yielded more tweets and different approaches to

their collection and analysis. I only collected English-language tweets because of my own linguistic limitations which are restricted to English. My French-language skills are not strong enough for this project. Knowledge of French in addition to any Indigenous languages in Canada could have expanded the Twitter searches and subsequent findings. Future research would, ideally, include more information, rather than tweets collected in isolation. Specifically, future Twitter research on this topic or related topics could be enriched by also including likes, comments, replies, retweets[29] and quote tweets[30] in order to better analyze social media interaction and to assess how many people are engaging with the tweets. With this corpus, I can only look at the tweets on their own without the entire context, including the breadth of the tweets' reach, the interactions they produced and, potentially, the collaborations that were fostered for Indigenous language work during COVID.

4.2 « Participatory Media and Issues of Privacy »

Because of the wide range of functions of this platform and its multimodality, Twitter can be considered a site of performance that encompasses a variety of genres (Bauman and Briggs 1990). Bauman and Briggs identify performance as a highly reflexive form of communication that, "… puts the act of speaking on display—objectifies it, lifts it to a degree from its interactional setting and opens it to scrutiny by an audience" (1990, 73). Put this way, performance relies on an audience—in this case, an audience of Twitter

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[29] Retweeting is the practice of sharing another person's tweet.

[30] Quote tweets let Twitter users share another person's tweet and add their own comments above the original tweet.

users. The matter of audience(s) is an important contextual consideration to be taken into account to better understand how tweets can play a role in Indigenous language revitalization as well as the implications of using tweets as research objects. If Twitter is oriented as performance-based, then an exploration of possible audiences is needed. Cocq (2015, 276) identifies three different kinds of Twitter audiences. A visible or participatory audience consists of followers who are visibly part of the network and can interact with the author of the tweet (*ibid.*). An inferred audience is not necessarily known by the author of the tweet, but might be interested in the same topic (*ibid.*). An abstruse audience is more distant from the tweet author and is part of an indistinct audience, which is an unknown readership whose presence is permitted because of the public availability of tweets (*ibid.*). These differences in audience are important because Twitter is, often, a hybrid social context—meaning that Twitter content and interactions can overlap between online and offline networks and practices (*ibid.*, 277; Leppänen et al. 2014).

Considerations of both audience(s) and privacy are central in the Twitter portion of this project. In Cocq's (2015) research on the use of Twitter among Sámi, the multilingual practices among this small community of practice were linked to emic (insider) discussions of ethnolinguistic identity and practices that extended beyond online communication. Additionally, since the number of people in this Sámi Twitter community of practice was too small to ensure anonymity by only removing names, Cocq (2015) chose not to refer to the Twitter authors by username, age, gender, or ethnolinguistic group (e.g. North Sámi, South Sámi, or surrounding national identities like Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and Russian). In relation to my project, although the

tweets I collected span across many communities of practice and ethnolinguistic groups, I will follow the same practice of anonymity in my analysis. Similarly, I find it important to respect the confidentiality of the Twitter users in this corpus. I am not the primary addressee of these tweets. I do not know the intended audience(s) of these tweets; however, future research with Indigenous language social media content producers could explore the intended audience(s), or expectations of privacy, of Indigenous language use in online contexts. While this is my chosen approach, I acknowledge that there could be various perspectives on this issue. For example, I considered including screen-captured images of the tweets in this thesis, but that would mean publishing pictures of people since many tweets include videos of people speaking. I decided to avoid this method because although Twitter users agreed to show their faces online with their publicly available accounts, they did not agree to be present in my thesis. Similarly, Twitter users in the corpus did not agree to have their Twitter handles published. Next, I turn to the first example of an Indigenous language revitalization effort made possible by new media: Indigenous language "words of the day" on Twitter.

4.3 « Indigenous Words of the Day »

There are 68 tweets in the corpus that include a word of the day[31] format, involving a word, phrase, or sentence in an Indigenous language followed by an English translation[32]

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[31] I included additional units of time in order to be more inclusive of more tweets of this nature (e.g. month, week).

[32] I acknowledge that word-for-word translations from many Indigenous languages to English (and other Indo-European languages) can be very difficult or even impossible.

(or vice versa). Often, there are attached images or pieces of art to complement and enhance the tweets. Words of the day can serve multiple purposes, including sharing words and sentences in Indigenous languages relating to the pandemic, as exemplified below:

1. Mi'kmaw word of the day: Siawa's'g (sea ah wah sêk) (keep going on) How do you say it in your language or a language you know? PS: we must all keep going on, but we must proceed with caution and keep informed. We are all in this together (Twitter, Mi'kmaw, March 2020).

2. inuk word of the day; ommatet songujuk = you have a strong heart. Thank you Nurses, thank you cleaners, thank you taxi drivers. You all have a heart of gold, working the front lines during a global pandemic (Twitter, Inuktitut, April 2020).

3. The #OjibweWordoftheWeek is aabawaasige - (the sun) warms things up. It's nice to take a break and sit in the sun for minute, even if you're stuck at home. It warms you up too! #learn #language (Twitter, Ojibwe, March 2020).

This selection of word of the day tweets is COVID-related and pedagogical in nature. In tweet 1, the Mi'kmaw sentence is accompanied with a phonetic breakdown to help English speakers with pronunciation. This example also invites Twitter users to contribute to the conversation by replying with a translation of this sentence in other (Indigenous) languages. This invitation to other Twitter users provides a dialogical frame, which points back to Twitter as a form of participatory new media. Additionally, all three examples are from the first two months of COVID and they reflect common sayings employed particularly in the beginning stage of the pandemic, such as "we are all in this together", thanking frontline workers, and encouraging people to go outside as often as possible.

Indigenous words of the day in the corpus intersect with pandemic-related issues in addition to activism, more broadly. The following tweets include references to

memorialized days, like National Indigenous Peoples Day[33] and Orange Shirt Day[34] and

social movements like Black Lives Matter.

> 4. ᐅᖁᐅᕐᓯᓕᓐᑦᐧᒃᑎᐤᑦ ᐅᓪᓗᒥ Word of day ᖁᐊᐅᖁᓯᕐᕆ ᑲᓇᑕᒥ ᓄᓇᖅᖢᑐᖁᐃᑦ ᐅᓪᓗᖕᖢᓂ! Quviasugissi Kanatami Nunaqaqtutuqait Ullunganni Happy National Indigenous Peoples Day! Kananginak Pootoogook's Innuk Agunasuttik #NationalIndigenousPeoplesDay #Inuit #Nunavut (Twitter, Inuktitut, June 2020).

> 5. #Algonquin Word of the Day - Pòkìdeyimìnàde / Orange (Colour) #AWOTD #KitiganZibi #EveryChildMatters #OrangeShirtDay (Twitter, Algonquin, September 2020).

> 6. Kinnitat Inosingit IkKanattut Black Lives Matter (Twitter, Inuktitut, September 2020).

These tweets bring attention to important and timely social issues while teaching

Indigenous languages contemporaneously. Indigenous languages on Twitter have

political dimensions both in reference to historical and ongoing human rights issues and,

additionally, the presence of Indigenous languages on this platform promotes the

visibility of linguistic and cultural identities. For example, some tweets of this genre

specifically speak to the reality of Indigenous language loss, including this community of

practice's steps to reclamation:

> 7. Silu'aam goodn (Do what makes your heart happy) - a phrase we learned in our online Sm'algyax class yesterday. Reclaiming the stolen language of our Ts'msyen

---

[33] June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada, which is "… a day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples" (Government of Canada 2021d). In cooperation with Indigenous organizations, the Canadian government chose June 21, the summer solstice, for National Aboriginal Day, which started in 1996 and is now called National Indigenous Peoples Day (*ibid.*).

[34] September 30 is Orange Shirt Day in Canada (OSD 2021). On Phyllis (Jack) Webstad's first day at residential school at the age of six, her new orange shirt, bought by her grandmother, was taken from her (*ibid.*). The annual commemoration "… opens the door to global conversation on all aspects of residential schools. It is an opportunity to create meaningful discussion about the effects of residential schools and the legacy they have left behind" (*ibid.*).

ancestors makes my heart happy indeed. Sm'algyax is a (heart emoji)-centred language. (heart emoji) (Twitter, Sm'algyax, August 2020).

This Twitter user provides a lesson in how to say this sentence in Sm'algyax, while communicating that their language was stolen. Here, participating in an online class is framed as a way of recovering their language and taking it back. Belmar and Glass highlight that in the context of English-language hegemony on- and offline, there is an ongoing "… struggle of (linguistic) minorities to reclaim spaces and discourses of their own" (2019, 2).

Word of the day tweets can intersect with current events and political activism and, at their core, they promote the use of Indigenous languages in daily life (Cassels 2019, 28). This genre of tweets offers linguistic content in small, digestible units, which can serve as introductory steps for new (or returning) learners who are embarking on a language learning journey that might be viewed as intimidating (*ibid.*, 27). The following examples further emphasize how Indigenous words of the day teach Indigenous language content:

> 8. Anishinaabemowin WOTD: Dagwaagin (It is fall/autumn). #Ojibwe #Anishinaabemowin #LanguageRevitalization (Twitter, Ojibwe, October 2020).
>
> 9. Today's word of the week is 'Book'- Pekw (pah-kuuh). The Halq'émeylem language was traditionally an oral language without a system of writing. During the 70s and 80s the Stó:lo elders worked to create an orthography. This helped future generations to carry the language forward (Twitter, Hul'q'umi'num, August 2020).
>
> 10. Inuk word of the day I am from Nain. Nainimiunguvunga. Nainimiuk = from Nain. When we add vunga, its [sic] adding "I'm from" Interested in your town? (Twitter, Inuktitut, October 2020).

Indigenous words of the day comprise a genre that follows a replicated formula that can encode both pedagogical and sociohistorical information. These repeated, formulaic tweets are instances of intertextuality: "the relationship of texts to other texts" (Bauman

2004, 1). Intertextuality provides a way of looking at how tweets themselves can mirror each other. In these examples, it is evident that words of the day provide a small piece of Indigenous language content, an English translation, and usually some additional context and cultural information. In some cases, the content is written, in others it is both spoken (via attached videos) and written. This mirroring or replication of popular tweet styles are reproduced based on previous versions. In other words, tweets are replicated if they are effective, which is the case for Indigenous words of the day.

4.4 « Multimodality and Land-Based Learning »

While the tweets so far have shown written forms of words of the day, there are also cases of people attaching videos to text-based tweets in order to demonstrate how to pronounce words and sentences. The following examples include this added feature:

> 11. Xwaskwiimiiwi Niipaahum (Corn Moon/August). Xwaskwiim ahkiihaakanung (at the Corn Field). In the #Munsee #Lunaape language, spoken in Ontario. Shaaxkameew. Shock ha muh. Rows/to grow in rows #indigenouslanguages #corn #august #farm #munseedelaware [pronunciation video showing a corn field with a person pronouncing these words originally attached to tweet] (Twitter, Munsee, August 2020).
>
> 12. ẃás:ẁax̌ḷáux̌v - it is smoky/hazy [pronunciation video showing a smoky sky with a person pronouncing these words originally attached to tweet] (Twitter, Heiltsuk, September 2020).
>
> 13. Anishinaabe language for Kitchen Items [pronunciation video showing a person naming and pointing to kitchen items originally attached to tweet] (Twitter, Ojibwe, April 2020).

These three tweets exemplify the multimodal nature of tweets—meaning that Twitter users can share language in various modes. In tweets 11 and 12, both spoken and written modes of Munsee and Heiltsuk are shared, while Ojibwe is shared only in its spoken mode in tweet 13. This multimodal capacity of Twitter has facilitated the sharing of land-

based language learning in some cases, as seen in tweets 11 and 12. In these examples, corn and the smoke-filled sky showed in the attached pronunciation videos are the starting points for language teaching. Multimodality is predicated on the idea that linguistic interactions always operate on multiple levels and have various functions (Ahearn 2017, 33). Analyzing multimodal discourse provides a framework to better understand how people co-construct meaning through multiple modes (*ibid.*). In tweets 11 and 12, the different modes of written text, spoken language, and parts of nature, as captured through video, coexist within a single medium. Since multimodality is interactional, the meanings of these tweets will be constructed variably depending on the Twitter audience (Cocq 2015, 276). This overlap of linguistic pedagogy and multimodality allows Twitter users interested in Indigenous language revitalization to indirectly experience the intersections of land and language as well as the orthographic, oral, and signed aspects of the languages. While in-person learning contexts have been mainly postponed during COVID, land-based teaching and learning is continued virtually through multimodal tweets. Now, I turn to ways that Twitter users have facilitated Indigenous language resource-sharing across Twitter audiences throughout the pandemic.

4.5 « Sharing Resources and Opportunities for Indigenous Language Learning »

During this period of COVID, there was a proliferation of shared information about opportunities and resources to help with Indigenous language learning from a distance. As highlighted in the previous section, the interactive and participatory nature of Twitter extends to users' ability to share and embed content beyond text-based posts. In Cocq's words,

> [t]he quasi-immediacy of posting and sharing makes Twitter a suitable medium for linking to homepages, blogs, or longer texts … Tweets are used to share links about news related to the language, tips for resources, and about dictionaries and textbooks for learning the language (Cocq 2015, 278).

Many tweets in the corpus include links to resources. Some tweets promote applications ("apps") that support Indigenous language learning, as seen below:

> 14. Schools may be closed but you can keep learning Indigenous languages at home! Start with Cayuga using this app created by [creator omitted] #IndigenousEducation For Android: [link omitted] For iPhone: [link omitted] (Twitter, Cayuga, April 2020).

> 15. Happy nîyâno kîsikâw! Check out this brilliant Cree language app that give [sic] you instant pronunciation. Well done [name of group omitted] #languagelearning #indigenouslanguages #firstnations #kinanâskomitin (Twitter, Cree, May 2020).

> 16. Here's another upcoming app: the Ojibway Learning Pre-School App, to teach young children the #Ojibway #language! Everyone at [institution omitted] is working very hard from home to get these done, so if you want to know more, keep an eye out on our page! #appdev #learn (Twitter, Ojibwe, March 2020).

Language apps have various features, including vocabulary flashcards, audio conversations, grammar notes, and interactive games (Begay 2013). They vary in content with some providing games, quizzes, and stories (*ibid.*). For example, Begay found that the Cherokee and Chickasaw apps provide hundreds of words and phrases with the accompaniment of audio recordings by native speakers (2013, 44). In these apps, words are categorized by basic terms (numbers, colours, food items) and conversational settings (greetings, commands) (*ibid.*). Sharing language apps on Twitter during the pandemic has been a popular way of promoting Indigenous language learning during social isolation.

There are many tweets that share various online tools and opportunities to engage in Indigenous language use beyond apps. Here are some examples:

17. Celebrate #NationalIndigenousHistoryMonth by visiting the #Passamaquoddy#Maliseet Language Portal. Which links the online P-M dictionary with an extensive archive of videos [link omitted] (Twitter, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy, June 2020).

18. "He calls it the "Dakwäkäda road report," using the traditional Indigenous name for the area. The [YouTube] videos are meant to be funny, but also informative." "It's just another avenue of spreading our language" (Twitter, Southern Tutchone, September 2020).

19. CBC Inuktitut language podcast … reunites Inuit with their stories [link omitted] (Twitter, Inuktitut, October 2020).

20. TUNE INTO [weekly radio show] at 3:00 pm EST today (Friday)! In addition to traditional Cree and Oji-Cree songs, Indigenous Language Specialists [names omitted] will be telling traditional legends, teaching some phrases in the language and a few other surprises! (Twitter, Cree and Oji-Cree, May 2020).

These resources offer exposure to Indigenous languages and tools to help with self-directed remote learning. Similar to the linguistic and cultural information embedded within apps, the language portal referenced in tweet 17 provides an archive of videos to help with Maliseet and Passamaquoddy language learning. Tweets 18 and 19 exemplify how YouTube videos and podcasts may have different foci—road reports and storytelling—but they ultimately share the same purpose of "spreading [the] language" (tweet 18). Scholars have shown that minoritized language communities of practice have quickly adopted new media forms for individual or communal linguistic interests (Davis 2018, 130). From tweets in Navajo (Peterson 2012), online comedy sketches in Breton (Adkins and Davis 2012), promoting Yucatec Maya on Facebook (Cru 2015), to these examples above, it is evident that communities of practice of minoritized languages are continually coming up with (new) media-facilitated avenues focused on language revitalization (Davis 2018, 130). The weekly radio show in tweet 20 is a form of mediatized minoritized language promotion. In the context of Irish-language radio

stations in Ireland, Cotter identifies the radio as a site of Irish language use, while also contributing to linguistic revalorization:

> Besides promoting language visibility, many minority-language media users, such as we find in Ireland and elsewhere, are attempting to publicly legitimize their language by using the recognized power of the mass media (2001, 310).

While the radio is not necessarily a form of "new" media, it is a way of promoting minoritized language visibility while connecting people to their language(s) in the context of English-language hegemony. Like the radio, these new media forms of language promotion in the tweets are additional ways of (re)kindling breathing spaces for minoritized languages, which are online spaces where the minoritized language is the preferred language of use, the subject of discussion, and the status of the minoritized language as a language is not contested (Belmar and Glass 2019, 14).

Within the corpus, there are many examples of tweets that promote these breathing spaces for minoritized languages through the medium of online Indigenous language classes. These online classes, shown below, offer communities of practice a way "to reclaim spaces and discourses of their own" (*ibid.*, 2).

> 21. The Cree Group speaking practice starts tomorrow. wāpahki! āstamik register for FREE at [website omitted] offering two levels, start date: Tues Oct 13 (Twitter, Cree, October 2020).
>
> 22. A Tlingit language class is continuing via Zoom, for free, for anyone interested. You can find information about the class, language resources and recordings of past classes at [website omitted] (Twitter, Tlingit, August 2020).
>
> 23. I have no plans for Friday night so I'll plan to do another Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Sníchim (Squamish Language) lesson at 6:30pm through Zoom. You can join on Friday with Meeting ID: [number omitted] (Twitter, Squamish, March 2020).
>
> 24. We are starting up our online offerings of the beginner Oneida course. Will include self-directed learning and weekly video meetings (with a teacher and

Elder). Please fill out our online form and we will keep you updated on a start date! Yawʌko! [sign up link omitted] (Twitter, Oneida, September 2020).

These tweets demonstrate the emergence of online Indigenous languages classes throughout this period of COVID, mainly on Zoom. Although I do not know the experiences of the people in the classes referenced above, I refer back to the panelists and participants cited in the previous chapter that highlighted both the affordances and limitations of online language teaching and learning. In addition, these examples reiterate the aspect of performance present in tweets because of the invitation to the audience to sign up for these classes.

The repeated practice of sharing and embedding links to online classes and resources is not only a commonly intertextualized genre of tweet, but demonstrates the process of entextualization within the tweets as well. Entextualization involves:

> … decentering discourse … [and] rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a *text*—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 73; emphasis in original).

In this case, tweets are forms of online texts. Entextualization involves a process of recycling discourse, which centres on two processes: decontextualization—taking discourse material out of its original context—and recontextualization—integrating and modifying this discourse in order to fit into a new context (Leppänen et al. 2014, 115). The idea of recycling and repurposing discourse to suit a new context reflects how existing and newly created resources and opportunities for Indigenous language learning are repackaged succinctly in the form of tweets. In other words, entextualization within the tweets reflects the diverse multimodal and pedagogical possibilities employed by Twitter users for Indigenous language revitalization efforts during this period of COVID.

Entextualization is also present in the shift of language classes from in-person to online, as I discussed in the previous chapter. People are adapting their methods and pedagogies to suit various multimodal platforms, like Zoom, YouTube, and Twitter.

4.6 « Hashtags and Ambient Affiliations »

Next, I will discuss how the practice of "hashtagging" is another performance-oriented feature of Twitter that can foster connections among various individuals and communities involved in Indigenous language revitalization efforts. The hashtag (#) is a symbol used on Twitter to add, enhance, or reiterate the subject matter of a post (Cocq 2015, 275). The public availability of Twitter means that tweets are disseminated to a broad audience, or public, of Twitter users. Within a broad public, Bonilla and Rosa (2015, 5) describe hashtags as a type of filing system that has the semiotic function of marking the intended significance of the tweet. Returning to intertextuality, hashtags link a broad range of tweets with the same hashtag together in one intertextual chain (*ibid.*). Together, these features of the hashtag help Twitter users to quickly locate relevant posts and to recommend their own posts to others who have similar interests (Cassels 2019, 32).

Many tweets in the corpus are accompanied by a hashtag denoting the name of the language that is the focus of revitalization or promotion, as seen in these tweets:

> 25. I've slacked on my Western Abenaki posts for a long time. So here's #1 of many illustrations I'm doing for my son to help teach him our language. Here's managwôn, or rainbow: #WesternAbenaki [artwork originally attached to tweet] (Twitter, Western Abenaki, April 2020).
>
> 26. dgwaagi - it is fall #anishinaabemowin #nishnaabemwin (Twitter, Ojibwe, October 2020).

27. Gwich'in languages classes?! #Gwichin [poster originally attached to tweet regarding language classes] (Twitter, Gwich'in, August 2020).

In these examples, the language name hashtags categorize these tweets as containing content relating to these languages. Hashtags create a "user-generated taxonomy", which includes a "… bottom-up classification of resources by users and is a result of using personal tagging to form a data structure" (Nair and Dua 2012, 310; Cocq 2015, 275). This grassroots classification of content allows quick retrieval of Indigenous language-specific content.

In addition, Zappavigna (2011) suggests that hashtags can also create "ambient affiliations" wherein Twitter users align themselves together, impermanently and even indirectly, "… by bonding around evolving topics of interest" (802). Not only do hashtags make tweets more searchable, but the fostering of ambient affiliations makes way for potentially fleeting, yet purposeful, interpersonal networks of people who are involved in similar efforts. Vigil-Hayes and colleagues (2017) noticed that multiple hashtags surrounding Indigenous issues or identities often existed within singular tweets. For example, #indigenous is framed as an identity hashtag, connecting Indigenous issues and identities across various geographic and ontological boundaries and it often exists alongside additional hashtags (Duarte and Vigil-Hayes 2017; Vigil-Hayes et al. 2019, 12). In the corpus, there are examples of tweets containing multiple hashtags,[35] which could lead to the production of ambient affiliations across various groups:

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[35] For the tweets in the corpus that contain hashtags, the average number of hashtags used per tweet is 2.96.

28. My baby practicing with his Inuinnaqtun app. #inuit #inuinnaqtun #languagerevitalization [video showing a child using the app originally attached to tweet] (Twitter, Inuinnaqtun, March 2020).

29. Anishinaabe language Zoom Sessions [YouTube channel omitted] #anishinaabemowin #nishnaabemowin #ojibwemowin #QuarantineLife #indigenouslanguages #LanguageLearning #anishinaabe #ojibwe #languagerevitalization (Twitter, Ojibwe, May 2020).

In these examples, the hashtags range in specificity and call attention to particular and more general audiences. For example, tweet 28 categorizes the tweet as relating to Inuit, then specifies the particular Inuit language, then broadens the categorization to #languagerevitalization. Similarly in tweet 29, the use of hashtags function to specify the language (with multiple spellings) and ethnolinguistic group, while calling attention to the broader categories that the tweet falls into—as seen in the hashtags #QuarantineLife, #indigenouslanguages, #LanguageLearning, and #languagerevitalization. Hashtags allow Twitter users to specify the audience(s) and communities they intend to reach "… from a highly localized group, such as speakers of their local dialect, to international groups sharing a common interest…" (Cassels 2019, 32). While there are degrees of specificity in terms of intended audiences, undoubtedly, there are also categories that are very broad and include topics that are not directly about Indigenous language revitalization, such as hashtags about quarantine and language learning.

30. Cree Chat on line coming back in October- Once a week with [person's name omitted] mahti nehiyawetan #creespeakingpractice #saskculture #covid19 (Twitter, Cree, September 2020).

As reiterated in tweet 30, some hashtags do not denote language revitalization on their own, such as #saskculture and #covid19. Especially for COVID-related hashtags, there will, naturally, be more viewers because of the widescale global searches about COVID-19. Overall, the key point about hashtag use in Indigenous language content-related

tweets is that hashtags both organize tweets for quick retrieval as well as provide

opportunities for facilitating connections or affiliations, on local and perhaps even global

scales.

4.7 « Challenges of New Media-Facilitated Language Revitalization Efforts »

So far, I have pointed out some of the networking and interactive capabilities of Twitter

for language work; however, there are some challenges associated with new media

platforms. A central challenge of new media platforms, like Twitter, is the issue of access

to basic requirements of daily living, including Internet and technological devices. As

presented in Chapter 2, there are stark differences between Indigenous and non-

Indigenous people in Canada in terms of these benchmarks. Even though Twitter has

millions of users (Dean 2021), this microblogging site is still a secluded system involving

only people who have access to Internet-based technology (Cocq 2015, 282). In Chapter

3, I built on Chapter 2's analysis of digital inequities by emphasizing that digital literacy

can be another barrier to technologically-mediated language revitalization activities.

Together, digital inequities and digital literacy impact who can access and navigate

language revitalization resources on Twitter.

In addition to access, Indigenous and minoritized languages have virtually no

technological support aside from basic keyboard input (Streiter, Scannell & Stuflesser

2006). Since statistics-based tools that help with features such as predictive text and spell

check rely on large amounts of open data, Indigenous and minoritized languages, again,

are poorly supported or not supported at all (Cassels 2019, 33). Hopefully with increased

minoritized language use online, these tools can be eventually created. While these

features are not yet developed, Twitter supports all Unicode scripts[36], including syllabics

as seen earlier in tweet 4 (Keegan et al. 2015).

Another issue is privacy in relation to cultural and intellectual property, as I mentioned

earlier in this chapter. While Twitter is a publicly available platform, posts containing

linguistic and cultural material can engender issues of access and property rights. Cultural

and intellectual property can include (archival) sound recordings, songs, stories, art,

pictures, and videos (Mills 2017). Since many tweets, for example, are accompanied by

audio, video, and pictures, the Indigenous language content itself may constitute an

artistic or literary work (Cassels 2019, 35; Mills 2017). Particularly if materials are being

recirculated and entextualized, as exemplified in some of the tweets presented earlier, the

original owner(s) may not know that their cultural or intellectual property is being used

on Twitter in this way for many people to see. Although Twitter can be a helpful platform

for sharing and reaching multiple audiences, it is possible that the owner(s) of the

material did not intend for their work to be shared in this domain.

The sustainability of Indigenous language Twitter content is another possible challenge

for social media content creators. Cassels highlights a "short attention span of the online

media environment"—pointing to the reality that the impact of online content is often

directly linked to its newness (2019, 36). If a content creator is not consistently posting

new content, then, their online presence can become obsolete because no new posts

equates to content disappearing from people's news feeds unless people explicitly search

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[36] In Unicode, a script is a collection of letters, diacritics, and written signs used to represent textual
information (Unicode 2019).

for it (Cassels 2019, 36). As highlighted earlier in this thesis, Indigenous language

teachers, administrators, and advocates have always had enormous workloads because of

the need to develop their own curricula and resources within very tight budgets. With the

compounding challenges to everyday life caused by the pandemic, consistently

maintaining social media accounts might be difficult in addition to their many other

responsibilities.

4.8   « Opportunities for New Media-Facilitated Language Revitalization Efforts »

Finally, I will describe some of the opportunities and benefits of new media platforms for

language revitalization initiatives. New media can facilitate opportunities for language

revitalization efforts and movements to expand to larger audiences. Twitter has provided

a platform for people to promote online classes and various language resources across

geographical, temporal, and ethnolinguistic boundaries. The proliferation of online spaces

for Indigenous languages can help to facilitate connections among Indigenous Peoples

who are distant from their ancestral territories (*ibid.*, 30). However, during COVID, even

if people are living close to each other, physical-distancing requirements, lockdowns, and

travel restrictions preclude in-person gathering. Therefore, online Indigenous language

content and opportunities for virtual learning could help to bridge the gaps of social and

linguistic isolation.

The continual growth of social media pages can also work as "digital, peer-produced

archive[s]" (Mylonas 2017, 277). The indefinite accessibility, and quick search and

retrieval process made easier through hashtags, of Twitter pages make the content therein

a form of archive that people interested in Indigenous language revitalization can

continually access (Cassels 2019, 37). Although social media content is more apparent to others if content producers are regularly posting, the content remains searchable and accessible for people who go looking for it.

The sharing of Indigenous language content on new media platforms can also contribute to increased minoritized language visibility and linguistic revalorization. The ability of new media to reach more audiences also serves as a way of spreading minoritized languages in contexts where English, and other large languages, are dominant. This proliferation of minoritized language use can be seen in the examples of intertextuality presented earlier. Forms of language promotion and pedagogy, such as Indigenous words of the day, are catching on and spreading across Twitter. Twitter is not only a domain of exchange, interaction, and opportunity, but it offers a space where, "… minority languages can develop based on the interests and premises of speakers of the language group" (Cocq 2015, 283). As evident in grassroots-led systems of classification (hashtags), Twitter users are creating networks and affiliations within and across various communities of language advocates where people might draw inspiration from each other. Twitter can be an integral tool for communities of practice and minoritized languages because it can provide contexts for increased language use, while contributing to visibility of languages that are, mainly, absent from mainstream media (*ibid.*).

4.9 « Conclusion »

The tweets created during this eight-month period of the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the many emerging ways that people involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada have used Twitter to produce content and opportunities aimed at linguistic and

cultural growth and vitality during an extended period of social isolation. Some of these vitalities include the production of online Indigenous language content in the form of words of the day, linguistic resources, and links to synchronous online classes. These efforts, in addition to hashtags, can foster ambient affiliations (Zappavigna 2011) and virtual breathing spaces (Belmar and Glass 2019) within and across various communities of practice. As a domain of performance, there are various audiences that witness and interact with these tweets. Twitter users in the corpus use their platform as a tool for language revitalization and for calling attention to current and important issues, such as life during the pandemic and the reality of language loss because of colonial interventions. In this way, this kind of social media participation has, what Mylonas calls, an "awareness raising effect" (2017, 286).

I have laid out many examples of how people have used participatory new media to start or continue language revitalization efforts during COVID. Now, finally, I will return to the contributions of a Rising Voices panelist who speaks to the role and limitations of technology in language work as he addresses Indigenous language advocates:

> Don't be afraid of technology, but it certainly isn't the answer … technology isn't the answer—it's just another place that we live (Lawson, July 16, 2020).

Here, Lawson points to the limitations of technology and refers to technology-mediated language work as a temporary "place". I highlight this contribution in order to contextualize new media-focused approaches to language revitalization. Lawson suggests that technology is a temporary avenue to keep things going during COVID, but it is not the "answer". With this reasoning, Indigenous language content on new media platforms

can be framed as a helpful supplement, not a substitute, for communities of practice

working toward language reclamation.

Chapter 5

5 « Conclusion »

Participation in Indigenous language revitalization is a political project aimed not only at increasing the number of competent language users but also at decolonization and improving the lives of Indigenous Peoples. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the inequalities and challenges facing Indigenous Peoples and these are the same issues that threaten language life. This research offers examples of the adjustments and innovations created by people involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada during the pandemic. These efforts reiterate the importance of language and its connection to the broader political context of continued Indigenous oppression and resilience.

The use of online tools, such as offering Indigenous language classes online and tweeting Indigenous words of the day, has been a central way that people involved in Indigenous language revitalization in Canada have continued or commenced their efforts during COVID-19. Panelists and participants indicated many merits of technology-mediated language work, including the ability to collaborate with people across vast distances, increased participation, and the use of recorded classes or meetings as a study tool and archive. Some challenges that panelists and participants identified include feelings of disconnection with their peers, frustrations with Zoom, and longing for the way things were before COVID, such as repeating new vocabulary with classmates in the hallway to and from class, as one student said. Indigenous language practitioners and advocates are also using Twitter to (re)circulate pedagogical resources, to share opportunities relating to training, funding, and work, and to communicate in and about Indigenous languages and cultures. The multimodal capacities of Twitter allow people to share Indigenous

languages through multiple modes, such as pronunciation videos and land-based learning.

Despite long periods of social isolation, the presence of Indigenous languages online in

their many forms signifies continued emergent vitalities (Perley 2011) during the many

challenges and disjunctures (Meek 2010) caused by the pandemic. As McIvor explains:

> Using these available tools, platforms, and opportunities, the work can safely
> propel forward and not allow the precious language work to fall away in this time
> of crisis. Indigenous communities' responses to the pandemic show that, just like
> the water, our languages always find a way forward (McIvor as cited in Frost
> 2020).

To provide context to Indigenous Peoples and languages finding a way forward, Chapter

2 identifies some of the colonial strategies that have worked to sever Indigenous Peoples

from their linguistic and cultural practices. I have argued that Indigenous Peoples face

exacerbated challenges in everyday life and especially during COVID because of the

inequities (re)produced by active colonial structures—particularly those found in

(language) legislation and resource allotment for Indigenous Peoples and languages. I

argue for the interlocking consideration of broader issues facing Indigenous Peoples,

which include lacking or inadequate necessities for safe and healthy living, such as safe

housing, clean water, and access to health care. These inequities must be immediately

addressed and redressed by governments in Canada. Internet infrastructure and speed

must also be improved so that more Indigenous Peoples can access and participate in the

full potentials of Internet-facilitated language revitalization efforts, as exemplified in the

third and fourth chapters.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe the ways that people are working toward language life

throughout COVID. At grassroots and institutional levels, many people have been able to

shift their activities online in the form of classes and interactive online discussions.

Twitter users in Canada are using the platform to share linguistic pedagogies and resources and to call attention to social and political issues concerning Indigenous Peoples and languages. Together, contributions of Twitter users and panelists emphasize the importance of exchange and interaction among communities of practice and various audiences. Twitter users are networking and sharing resources and opportunities to audiences, near and far. Hashtags added to tweets help in this networking effort—fostering the possibility to create ambient affiliations (Zappavigna 2011) among people who are involved or interested in similar work. Like recordings of online classes, tweets can also serve as an archive for people to access and review Indigenous language content.

The online conversations hosted by Rising Voices facilitated the exchange of experiences, advice, and ideas between Indigenous panelists from Canada and Mexico in addition to the attendees who used the chat feature to participate and contribute in real time. In part, these discussions address the linguistic, sociocultural, and technical obstacles they face in promoting their languages online (Avila 2021, 316). Collectively, the sharing of experiences and recommendations in these panels inform a large portion of this thesis, which calls attention to what the panelists identify as the policies, resources, and strategies necessary for sustaining language life. For example, one panelist advocates for the paid work of Indigenous language holders, while another panelist recommends the continued and non-limited free use of tools like Zoom for Indigenous and minoritized language communities of practice. The public nature of these conversations, which are shared with a global audience on Facebook and YouTube, showcase language work and its possibilities (*ibid.*). In Avila's words, "A direct result of these gatherings has been the creation of local, national, and international networks of mutual support and solidarity"

(Avila 2021, 316). In this way, people from various ethnic, national, and geographic communities of practice are coming together for a shared purpose.

Returning now to the relationship of technology and language revitalization, I want to come back to the comment in Chapter 4 that technology can greatly enhance language revitalization efforts, but it is not the "answer" (Lawson, July 16, 2020). The people cited throughout this thesis have pointed to a multifaceted approach to language revitalization efforts. Like technology, language legislation, solely, does not guarantee the safety of Indigenous language vitalities; although, it is bolstered by effective planning and implementation led by Indigenous communities. Davis frames language revitalization programs as contemporary parts of "larger narratives of language survivance", where Indigenous communities have resisted violent, hegemonic colonial governments and their languages (2018, 143). Undoing the work of colonial structures that separated Indigenous Peoples from Indigenous languages requires more than language instruction and programming (*ibid.*, 145) as well as online technologies for language work. Davis argues for the reconnection of language to economic and social success as well as transforming the domains of Indigenous language use (*ibid.*). Davis points to the importance of creating occupational and financial benefits for those who are, or might become, Indigenous language users; for example, by creating more jobs in language revitalization and by paying teachers, students, administrators, and planners for the language work they do (*ibid.*). Panelists cited in this thesis communicated similar views. Perhaps, in the future, there will be more and more opportunities related to online resource- and network-building for people involved in the revitalization of Indigenous and minoritized languages. Chapter 4 demonstrates how Twitter users have been transforming the

domains of Indigenous language use by participating in the revitalization and promotion

of Indigenous languages through tweets. Returning to Avila, the transformation of

domains, including the Internet, is just one part of language revitalization:

> But it is important to stress that the Internet and digital media are only tools, and
> that the real driving force behind this work is the hundreds of young people who
> have stepped forward and demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that their
> language and culture are reflected in all facets of society, including the Internet
> (2021, 316).

In line with the frame of language life and looking toward linguistic futures, I am eager to

see how these driving forces will continue to transform domains—both online and

offline—in the years to come. Future research could explore how online tools might

complement the return to in-person language revitalization efforts in Canada and in other

contexts around the world. With the upcoming UNESCO Decade of Indigenous

Languages (2022-2032), the recent passing of Bill C-15 to implement the United Nations

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Canadian law, and the

very recent appointment of an Indigenous Language Commissioner and three Directors in

Canada, I wonder how Indigenous-led language revitalization initiatives will continue to

work toward language life. Accountability and redress from government and religious

institutions and the implementation of the TRC's Calls to Action must accompany these

efforts.

Finally, I return to Perley's (2011; 2017) call for an ideological shift from language death

to language life. Doing so, Perley says, will create possibilities for Indigenous language

futures (2017, 125). The people cited in this thesis are working to create the conditions

that highlight the "excitement of emergent vitalities" (*ibid.*, 125-126). While a future-

oriented outlook is important, it is also imperative to reflect on the work that has been

done already and the work that is currently underway. I conclude with a final excerpt

from a survey participant who captures this progress:

> Sometimes we wish we could do certain language learning activities together, but we still have great virtual classes. Everyone is very understanding. We are all learning together since we do not have access to any fluent speakers. We make mistakes, we laugh, and we have fun. Sometimes I think that we aren't making much progress, but then I hear my parents trying to speak Cree and write syllabics in the evenings. For me, that is a sign that we have already accomplished so much.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Western Research

Date: 3 July 2020

To: Dr. Tania Granadillo

Project ID: 115548

Study Title: Oneida Language Revitalization during COVID-19

Short Title: Oneida Lg Revitalization

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: 05/Jun/2020

Date Approval Issued: 03/Jul/2020

REB Approval Expiry Date: 03/Jul/2021

Dear Dr. Tania Granadillo

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Email Script Recruitment	Recruitment Materials	21/Jun/2020	
Interview Guide	Interview Guide	21/Jun/2020	
Verbal Consent Script	Verbal Consent/Assent	21/Jun/2020	
Online Survey Implied Consent	Implied Consent/Assent	21/Jun/2020	
Online Survey	Online Survey	21/Jun/2020	
Social Media Recruitment	Recruitment Materials	26/Jun/2020	

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Appendix B: Online Survey

Qualtrics Online Survey: The Impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous Language Revitalization Efforts in Canada

1. What is language is the focus of revitalization?
2. If applicable, list alternate name(s) of the language seeking revitalization.
3. Where is the language spoken?
4. What is the situation of the language? Please select the description that best applies. You may add details in the comment box below.
    a. There are no first-language speakers.
    b. There are a few elderly speakers.
    c. Many members of the grandparent generation speak the language, but the younger people generally do not.
    d. Some adults in the community are speakers, but the language is not spoken by children.
    e. Most adults in the community are speakers, but children generally are not.
    f. All members of the community, including children, speak the language, but we want to make sure this does not change.
    g. There is a new population of speakers or people are beginning to learn the language after a period of time in which no one spoke the language.
    h. Unknown.
    i. Other/more detail: _____
5. How many people speak the language?
    a. None at the moment.
    b. 1-9
    c. 10-99
    d. 100-999
    e. 1000-9999
    f. 10 000-99 999
    g. More than 100 000
    h. Unknown
    i. Other/more detail: _____
6. What is your role in the revitalization effort? Please select the most appropriate option.
    a. Direct staff (including instructors, teaching assistants, native speaker collaborators, curriculum developers)
    b. Administrator/planner
    c. Student
    d. Indirect participant (e.g. family member of participant(s) involved in language revitalization efforts)
    e. Other/more detail: _____
7. If applicable, what is the name of the language revitalization program or initiative? _____

8. Please select the categories that best describe the initiative's activities <u>before COVID-19</u>. Please select all that apply.
    a. Language nest (language revitalization through child care provided by speakers of the language)
    b. Pre-school (language instruction in early childhood education)
    c. Bi/multilingual school (school with the language as a medium of instruction along with one or more languages)
    d. Immersion school (school in which the language is the only exclusive or almost only medium of instruction; the language may or may not be a student's heritage or dominant language)
    e. Mother tongue education (school with instruction in a language of the local community for students who speak it)
    f. Language classes
    g. Language camps
    h. Family programming (designed to support families speaking the languages in the home)
    i. Master-Apprentice (partnership between learners of the language and speakers for one-on-one learning)
    j. Teacher training (training for teachers of the language)
    k. Educational materials (development of lesson plans and educational resources)
    l. Technology and cyberspace (presence of the language on the Internet or in phone apps, social media, video games, etc., or use of these platforms for language learning)
    m. Documentation (audio and video language recording; development of grammars and dictionaries)
    n. Cultural events
    o. Media (use of the language in radio or television, or in print)
    p. Other/more detail: _____
9. In your opinion, how was the language revitalization effort you are involved in going <u>before COVID-19</u>?
    a. Very well
    b. Well
    c. Not very well
    d. Not well at all
10. Have you, or would you like to, continue(d) language revitalization activities <u>during COVID-19</u>?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Maybe
11. Please explain your motivations, reservations, or uncertainties behind your answer to the previous question. _____
12. If applicable, please describe what would/does your ideal (given the circumstances) language revitalization initiative look like during the physical distancing measures of COVID-19? _____

13. Have you been able to achieve this ideal alternative plan for language revitalization (as you answered in the previous question)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Somewhat
    d. Planning is still in progress
    e. Not applicable
    f. Other details/comments: _____
14. If applicable, what are some difficulties or barriers that have made this ideal alternative plan hard/impossible to achieve? _____
15. In your opinion, how is the language revitalization effort you are involved in doing during COVID-19?
    a. Very well
    b. Well
    c. Not very well
    d. Not well at all
16. Please elaborate on how the language revitalization effort is currently doing: _____
17. If applicable, how frequently did you use the target language (the language seeking revitalization), if at all, before the physical distancing measures of COVID-19? _____
18. If applicable, how frequently have you been using the target language, if at all, since the start of physical distancing measures of COVID-19? _____
19. In what contexts, if any, did you use the target language before the physical distancing measures of COVID-19? Please select all that apply.
    a. Telephone
    b. Video calls (e.g. FaceTime, Zoom)
    c. Online video games
    d. Online language revitalization classes/games
    e. Text messaging
    f. Instant messaging (e.g. Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp)
    g. Social media
    h. E-mail
    i. At home with family
    j. Not applicable
    k. Language revitalization or community contexts; please specify: _____
    l. Other. Please specify: _____
20. In what contexts, if any, did you use the target language since the start of physical distancing measures of COVID-19? Please select all that apply.
    a. Telephone
    b. Video calls (e.g. FaceTime, Zoom)
    c. Online video games
    d. Online language revitalization classes/games
    e. Text messaging
    f. Instant messaging (e.g. Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp)

g. Social media
h. E-mail
i. At home with family
j. Not applicable
k. Language revitalization or community contexts; please specify: _____
l. Other. Please specify: _____

21. The following are statements about your thoughts and feelings about <u>the role of technology in language revitalization during COVID-19</u>. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements using the following scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I have reliable access to the Internet.					
I always have access to the devices necessary for online language revitalization activities (e.g. tablets, computers).					
I feel confident in my abilities to use the required technology of the online language revitalization activity.					

*Note: the participants were prompted to select their roles in language revitalization. The following sets of questions reflect specific questions for each role.

22. The following are statements related to your role as direct staff in language revitalization. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements using the following scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I have been successful at keeping students engaged in language learning.					
Participation from students has stayed the same during COVID-19.					
It has been easy to come up with language lessons/materials that do not involve in-person activities.					
It is easy to teach the target language while not in-person.					

23. The following are statements related to your role as an administrator/planner in language revitalization. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements using the following scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
It has been easy to coordinate language					

revitalization programming from home.					
It is easy to plan language revitalization for the future.					
I have been able to continue accessing funding required for language revitalization.					
I have been able to shift funds to accommodate the current circumstances of the pandemic.					

24. The following are statements related to your role as a student in language revitalization. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements using the following scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
My use of and exposure to the target language has stayed the same since the start of COVID-19.					

It has been easy to remember the target language.					
I feel as though I am learning the same amount of material as I was before COVID-19.					

25. The following are statements related to your role as an indirect participant in language revitalization. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements using the following scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
It is easy to support my family member's language revitalization efforts during COVID-19.					
My family member talks about/in the target language as much as he/she/they					

did before COVID-19.					

26. If applicable, are there aspects of online learning that you think could be useful to keep in place after the pandemic? _____
27. Is there anything else you would like to share with us? _____

Interview Follow-up

We would be grateful for the opportunity to follow up with you for an interview through Zoom that will last approximately one hour. You will receive $20 for participating in the interview. If you're interested, please provide your name and e-mail address below and you will be contacted to arrange an interview time.

___ Yes. I'm interested in being interviewed. Here is my name and e-mail address: _____

___ No. I'm not interested in being interviewed.

May we include excerpts from your responses when we report on the survey results? Any excerpts would be cited anonymously.

___ Yes

___ No

Appendix C: Frequencies of Indigenous Languages and Dialects in Twitter Corpus

Dialects are indicated with an asterisk [*]

Algonquian languages

       Blackfoot (Siksiká) – 23
       Algonquian languages (general) – 1

  Cree-Montagnais languages

       Atikamekw* (Attikamekw, Tête de Boule) – 1
       Innu-aimun (Montagnais) – 3
       Naskapi – 1
       Plains Cree* - 1
       Swampy Cree* - 4
       Woods Cree* - 1
       Cree (nēhiyawēwin, ᓀᐦᔭᐍᐃᐧᐣ) (dialect not specified) – 126

  Eastern Algonquian languages

       Abenaki (Abnaki) – 1
          Western Abenaki* - 1
       Malecite-Passamaquoddy (Maliseet-Passamaquoddy) – 2
       Mi'kmaw (Lnuismk, Mi'kmawi'simk, Mi'kmwei) – 24
       Munsee (Delaware, Ontario Delaware, Munsee Delaware) – 31

  Ojibway-Potawatomi languages

       Algonquin (Anicinàbemowin, Anishinàbemiwin, Algonkin)*[37] – 11
       Eastern Ojibwe* - 4
       Western Ojibwe (Plains Ojibwe, Saulteaux)* - 4
       Ottawa (Odawa)* - 1
       Ojibwe (Anishinaabemowin, Ojibwa, Ojibway) (dialect not specified) - 99
       Oji-Cree – 8
       Potawatomi (Pottawotomi, Bodéwadmi, Bodewadmi) – 8

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[37] Algonquin is grouped within the Ojibway-Potawatomi languages in the Language Highlight Tables from the 2016 Census (StatCan 2018c), although it is debated whether Algonquin is a dialect of Ojibwe or distinct Algonquian language.

Athabaskan languages

    Northern Athabaskan languages

        Babine–Witsuwit'en (Nadot'en-Wets'uwet'en) – 2
        Chipewyan (Dënesųłiné) – 2
        Dogrib (Tłįchǫ, Tłįchǫ Yatìì, Thlingchadine) – 1
        Gwich'in (Dinjii Zhuh K'yaa, Kutchin, Kuchin) – 22
        Kaska – 2
        Slavey-Hare languages
            Dene K'e (Slavey) – 5
            Dene Zhatié (South Slavey) – 1
        Tagish - 1
        Tsuut'ina (Sarcee, Sarsi, Tsutina) – 2
        Tutchone languages
            Southern Tutchone (Dän'ke, Dän k'e kwänje) – 4

Haida (X̱aad Kíl, K'iis Xaat'aay) – 8

Inuit languages

    Inuktitut (ᐃᓄᒃᑎᑐᑦ)- 106
    Inuktut (Inuit language/dialect not specified) – 3
    Inuinnaqtun – 7
    Inuvialuktun – 2
    Inuit Sign Language (IUR, Uukturausingit, ᐆᑐᖅᕆᐅᓯᖕᒋᑦ, Atgangmuurngniq, ᐊᑎᒡᒫᒍᖅᓂᖅ) – 1

Iroquoian languages

    Cayuga (Gayogo̱hó꞉nǫ') – 14
    Mohawk (Kanien'kéha) – 21
    Oneida (Onʌyotaʔa꞉ka) - 16
    Seneca (Onödowá'ga꞉, Onötowá'ka꞉, Tsonnontouan, Taroko) – 4
    Wyandot (Wendat, Huron) – 2

Ktunaxa (Kootenai, Kootenay, Kutenai) – 5

Michif (Mitchif, French Cree) – 19

Salishan languages

    Comox (Éy7á7juuthem) – 1
    Halq'eméylem (Halkomelem, Hul'q'umi'num') – 15
    Lillooet (St̓át̓imcets / Sƛ'aƛ'imxəc, Ucwalmícwts) – 2
    Nsyilxcən (Nsilxcín, Nsyilxcn, Nsəlxcin, Okanagan-Colville) - 9
    Nuxalk (nuxalk, Bella Coola, Bellacoola) – 1

Secwepemctsín (Secwepemctsin, Secwepemc, Shuswap) – 10
She shashishalhem (Sechelt, sháshishálem, Siciatl) – 2
Squamish (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh sníchim, sníchim) – 16
Nłeʔkepmxcín (Nlha7kápmx, Thompson, Thompson River Salish) – 3
North Straits Salish
     Saanich (Sənčáθən, SENĆOŦEN)* - 3

Siouan languages

     Dakota (Dakhota, Dakhótiyapi, Dakȟótiyapi) – 2
     Nakota (Nakoda, Stoney, Isga) – 15

Tlingit (Łingít, Tlinkit, Thlinget) - 3

Tsimshian languages

     Sm'álgyax (Coast Tsimshian)* - 8
     Nisga'a (Nishga, Niska', Nisk'a') – 6

Wakashan languages

     Chinuk Wawa (Chinook Wawa, Chinook Jargon) – 1
     Ditidaht (diitiidʔaaʔtx̣, Nitinaht, Nitinat, Southern Nootkan) – 2
     Hailhzaqvla (Heiltsuk, Heiltsuk-Oweek'ala, Bella Bella) – 43
     Haisla (X̄enaksialaḵala, X̄a''islaḵala, Xiʔslak'ala) – 5
     Kwak'wala (Kwakwaka'wakw, Kwakiutl) – 6
     Kwak'wala Sign Language – 1
     Nuu-chah-nulth (nuučaan̓uł, Nootka, Nootkans) – 3

Indigenous languages in Canada (general) – 69[38]

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[38] This coding reflects tweets that contained information, resources, and opportunities for various Indigenous language practitioners in Canada without specifying languages or dialects.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Laura Gallant

Post-secondary   Western University
Education and   Master of Arts
Degrees: London, Ontario, Canada
2019-2021

Western University
Bachelor of Arts (Hons)
London, Ontario, Canada
2016-2019

University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2015-2016

Honours and   SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's
Awards: 2020-2021

Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2019-2020, 2020-2021 (declined)

Related Work   Teaching Assistant
Experience   Western University
2019-2021

Conferences:

The Shift to Online Learning during COVID-19 – Perspectives from Learners of Indigenous Languages in Canada. March 2021 (virtual). Student Presentation Winner. Western Anthropology Graduate Society (WAGS) Conference

"Keeping Language Work Going": Indigenous Language Revitalization on Twitter in Canada during the Coronavirus Pandemic. March 2021 (virtual).
Western Interdisciplinary Student Symposium on Language Research (WISSLR) Conference

#LearnAtHome: Indigenous Language Revitalization in Canada during COVID-19 – Accelerating Online Pedagogies and Language Promotion. January 2021 (virtual). Graduate Research Seminar (Western University – Department of Anthropology)