

# **A Survey of the Literature on Aboriginal Language Learning and Teaching**

**Prepared by**

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of the  
University of Calgary**

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This literature survey was conducted to provide information on Aboriginal language learning and teaching in Alberta. Although direction was given to the researchers/writers to establish parameters for the task, the content of this document reflects the writers' perspectives on topics and subjects reviewed and does not necessarily reflect the position of Alberta Education.

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# Terms of Reference

The Language Research Centre (LRC) at the University of Calgary was contracted to undertake a review of the literature on Aboriginal languages. Indigenous language pedagogy and instructional practices were investigated on an international scale.

This report provides an overview of the current literature relating to:

- 1) the language to culture connection
- 2) Aboriginal language pedagogy and instructional practices
- 3) parental and community involvement

**Note:** The Aboriginal Language Pedagogy section includes instructional strategies, methods and resources as well as teacher and instructor development considerations.

## Executive Summary

### 1. Aboriginal Languages: The Context

- Aboriginal language encompasses, and is inextricably intertwined with, the culture and traditions of the people. Language helps to express a worldview—a way of being and knowing—and is linked to Indigenous identity.
- Aboriginal culture and traditions should be taught and explored alongside language learning. Cultural understanding is essential to meaningful interactions outside the classroom. It helps the student interpret the unspoken language (behaviour, actions), values and beliefs of the people who speak the language.

### 2. Aboriginal Language Pedagogy

#### A. Instructional Strategies, Methods and Resources

- Most writers on Aboriginal language education suggest that classroom teaching of these languages focus on enabling students to communicate in the language and include methods and instructional strategies that are holistic and experiential in nature. The intent is to make language learning meaningful, memorable, purposeful and useable.
- Techniques for communication-based language instruction include the language proficiency method (gradually increasing the intensity and complexity of language use), content-based language teaching (teaching school content in the Indigenous language, possibly through an immersive approach) and using the Aboriginal language in routine classroom tasks.
- The total physical response (TPR) method incorporates both simple and complex action (body movements) and visual props and aids with appropriate words and phrases.

- Experiential learning is another example of action learning. Through this approach, students are encouraged to exercise their language skills outside the classroom through meaningful exercises (e.g., interviewing community members, language use during field trips, creating projects about local history/geography/people).
- Using the oral tradition is an important and effective way of teaching Aboriginal languages. While not all stories, narratives or poems will be appropriate for classroom use, many traditional oral materials can be used in either their spoken form or in transcription.
- Technologically based instructional strategies and resources—including computer-assisted language learning (CALL) programs, Web sites and CD-ROMs—can be a valuable addition to the language teaching process, but should not be the only method used in Aboriginal language instruction.
- While some instructional resources currently exist for Aboriginal languages, development and quality assurance is an ongoing aspect of the evolution of language curriculum.

## **B. Aboriginal Language Teacher Recruitment and Development**

- Elders are often the most fluent speakers of Aboriginal languages. When they enter the classroom to assist with language learning (e.g., as storytellers, additional instructors, guests, mentors for teachers still learning the language), it is very important that the Elder’s knowledge, wisdom and status within his or her community be taken into account. In addition, traditional Indigenous protocols that exist in every community are to be learned and followed.
- In-service professional development programs for Aboriginal language teachers give the emerging professionals a variety of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The resulting community of professionals is a resource to draw upon when members encounter challenges. This community also provides the sense of belonging and opportunities to develop in the affective domain.
- “Alternative” Aboriginal language teacher development programs could be explored, including summer language institutes and off-site university programs.
- Language teachers may benefit from opportunities to learn about language through the study of linguistics.

## **3. Family and Community Involvement in the Language Learning Process**

- Advisory bodies and language committees are effective in creating, guiding, supporting, maintaining, and ensuring consistency and accuracy in language programs. These bodies include a mix of Elders, community members, educators (teachers, administrators) and external resource people (linguists, curriculum developers).
- Parental involvement and participation in a language program contribute to the motivation and success of children. Many Aboriginal parents either do not speak their Aboriginal language or do not feel comfortable using the language, due to previous negative experiences. These parents may need programs to help them learn the language along with their children (an example of “intergenerational” learning) or encouragement and support in using the language with their children at home.

## Introduction

In the *Common Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Language and Culture Programs*, the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education states, “The outcomes for Aboriginal as a Second Language are based on the assumption that language will be taught and used while teaching cultural content,” and “Communicative proficiency is the goal of Aboriginal Second Language programs. Communicative proficiency is the ability to use a language to function in a variety of basic language use contexts and situations offered by a culture. These functions involve listening, reading, speaking and writing skills” (2000: 89). These statements reflect comments that have been made by Elders, teachers, educational theorists, linguists and others concerned with the state of Aboriginal languages not only in Canada, but internationally. The statements stress that language teaching should not be taught in isolation of cultural understandings as language is the expression of culture.

Although the literature search for this document was extensive, the process and results were limited by various factors and challenges. First, the investigation was largely limited to online library and Internet searches. Due to limited findings in Canada, the search was extended to Indigenous languages on an international scale. Overall, the literature findings for this particular literature search revealed more linguistic language theoretical and practical findings than pedagogical language strategies. However, by attending conferences and speaking with representatives from the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI) and Aboriginal language teachers, it became apparent that significant pedagogical-linguistic language materials were and are being developed within First Nations communities and that these materials were not widely published and made available to public educational institutions or libraries. For this reason, this report may serve as the initial report on Indigenous languages; it is anticipated that a more detailed report be completed specifically for Alberta or Canadian Aboriginal languages in response to rapid development and findings in this area. This document can be pedagogically supported by previous language reports (i.e., second language and multicultural language reports; see <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/languages/litreview.pdf>) undertaken by Alberta Education and the University of Calgary’s Language Research Centre.

It should be noted that the organization of the authors that are listed in the document does not necessarily indicate order of importance, but represents what was felt to be a natural development or “flow” within an idea; also, because of the interconnectedness of ideas and concepts, authors may be listed under more than one heading. (Full references will be given at the first use of an author’s work; abridged references will be given after that.) It should also be noted that the terms “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous” are used as synonymous terms when referring to Aboriginal people and their languages on a broad scale. Some of the American authors referred to use the term “Indian”; this term is kept in quotations of these authors, but it is no longer a preferred term. There was an effort to be consistent in spelling the names of particular Aboriginal groups; nevertheless, readers may find that the names of specific groups are spelled differently by different authors (e.g., Mi’kmaq vs. Micmac). (See the Indian and Northern Affairs document *Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* [[http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/pdf\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/pdf_e.html), retrieved April 9, 2007] for further suggestions on appropriate terminology.)

# 1. Aboriginal Languages: The Context

## Alberta's Aboriginal Languages

The Aboriginal languages spoken in Alberta are as follows, in order of number of speakers (most to least):

- Cree, including Plains Cree (mainly in central and southern AB), Woodland Cree (mainly in northern AB) and Métis Cree (mainly in north central AB)
- Blackfoot, mainly in southern AB
- Dene Sų́liné, mainly in northern AB
- Stoney (Nakoda), mainly in west central AB
- Dene Tha' (Slavey), mainly in northern AB
- Dunne-za (Beaver), mainly in northern AB
- Sauleaux, mainly in western AB
- Tsuu T'ina, mainly in south central AB
- Michif, mainly in central northeastern AB

Alberta's Aboriginal languages are tremendously diverse. Cree, Blackfoot and Sauleaux belong to the Algonquian family of languages, but are mutually unintelligible; Stoney belongs to the Siouan family of languages; Dene Sų́liné, Dene Tha', Dunne-za and Tsuu T'ina belong to the Athabaskan family of languages (speakers of the first three can understand each other to some extent); and Michif is a unique language that mixes Cree and French.

In the 2001 Census, Statistics Canada reported that

- 15 010 Alberta residents reported Cree as their mother tongue
- 2765 residents identified themselves as first language speakers of Dakota/Sioux
- 2630 reported Blackfoot as their mother tongue
- 625 Albertans identified themselves as native speakers of Ojibway (another Algonquian language)
- 250 people said their mother tongue was South Slave
- 225 said it was Chipewyan (Dene)
- 100 said they were native speakers of Inuktitut (most widely spoken in the northern regions of Canada)
- 1760 Albertans said that an Aboriginal language other than those listed above was their native language.

In total, 23 380 Alberta residents identified themselves as having an Aboriginal first language. (All data taken from Statistics Canada's Web site at <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/demo38c.htm>, retrieved February 25, 2007.)



## Aboriginal Languages and Cultural Perspectives: Ways of Being, Ways of Knowing

For Aboriginal peoples, language encompasses a way of knowing and a way of being. The Maori have the phrase “*Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori*,” meaning “the language is the life essence of Māori.” The Cree phrase “*kinêhiyâwiwininaw nêhiyawêwin*” means “the Cree language is our identity.” These are just two examples in Indigenous languages that emphasize the integral importance of language to the essence of knowing and being in a certain perspective. Because of this, many authors take Indigenous languages and cultures to be inextricably intertwined.

- Battiste, Marie. 2000a. “Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society.” *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, ed. by Marie Battiste, 192–208. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Mi’kmaq educator Marie Battiste, a professor in the Indian and Northern Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan and a strong proponent of the holistic incorporation of Aboriginal knowledge into education and other sociocultural institutions, writes that teaching Aboriginal languages without taking Aboriginal culture into account “perpetuate[s] the belief that different cultures have nothing to offer but exotic food and dance or a shallow first chapter in the story of what is to come” (202).

Battiste joins many writers in suggesting that language and culture are inextricably intertwined. For instance, she describes languages as a key method of transmitting elements of culture: “Aboriginal languages are the basic media for the transmission and survival of Aboriginal consciousness, cultures, literatures, histories, religions, political institutions, and values. They provide distinctive perspectives on and understandings of the world...” (199). Some values include extended family units, collaboration and sharing, time as a cycle rather than a straight line, harmony and balance, and the interrelationship of all things in the natural world.

Further, Battiste and others have suggested that the worldview transmitted through Aboriginal languages can be of great use to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in their lives.

Western education has much to gain by viewing the world through the eyes and languages of Aboriginal peoples. The earth and its resources must be viewed through the lens of tribal knowledge if we are to understand how to protect the universe. Rituals and ceremonies that cleanse and heal, maintaining the balances, must be respected and honoured. Western science has promoted the development of modern society, which has initiated the best and worst of development from environmental and economic perspectives. Today we are faced with how we are to survive the global disasters created by our scientific ingenuity, as well as how we can bridge knowledge gaps created by the diversity of people and thought. Aboriginal languages and education can be the means to opening the paradigmatic doors of contemporary public education. Creating a balance between two worldviews is the great challenge facing modern educators. (2000a: 202)

A number of insightful essays discussing the importance of these values to Aboriginal cultures can be found in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, edited by Marie Battiste (2000b), and *Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Study in Decolonization*, edited by K. P. Binda and Sharilyn Caillou (2001).

Finally, Battiste emphasizes the need to develop an education system that welcomes diversity of both background and perspective. Such a system would begin to remediate some of the harm caused by outdated colonial styles of education, and would allow for the incorporation of diverse knowledge bases—including Aboriginal knowledge—into modern society. From the Aboriginal perspective, Aboriginal languages are key to creating appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal students:

Where Aboriginal knowledge survives, it is transmitted through Aboriginal language. There is clear and convincing evidence that student achievement and performance in school and pride in Aboriginal communities and heritages are directly tied to respect for and support of the students' Aboriginal languages (2000a: 199).

- McGrath, Janet. 2002. "Report on the Workshop 'World of Inuktitut'." *Indigenous Languages Across the Community*, ed. by Barbara Burnaby, and Jon Reyhner, 103–04. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

Language consultant Janet McGrath, a native of Taloyoak, Nunavut, facilitated a workshop on the Inuktitut language at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages conference in 2000. In her report of the workshop, she notes that the participants felt that culture was an essential part of any successful Inuktitut language program:

Learners must develop a new worldview in accordance with the new language. Any effective program must have culture built into the curriculum. The cultural components should reflect the values of that society so the language learner has the opportunity to experience those values in contrast to his or her own society's values. The language teacher should also help students to appreciate how the cultural values and worldview are reflected in the language. This would encourage students to make their own observations of the cultural worldview and to accept this new language on its own terms rather than trying to make it fit what they already know of language through their mother tongue. (104)

McGrath's report provides an example of beginning second language instruction that incorporates this idea:

In the Japanese language program at York University, instruction is divided equally between language and culture. For example, in learning to name the different parts of a Japanese house, the students first examine the cultural uses of space. Only after use of and relation to space are explored from a Japanese point of view are the names for the spaces given in Japanese. With this teaching method, fewer words are introduced, but

students are more able to communicate intelligibly with those in Japanese society. The students demonstrate cultural awareness, which opens more doors for language learning opportunities. (104)

- Leavitt, Robert M. 1995. "Language and Cultural Content in Native Education." *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, ed. by Marie Battiste, and Jean Barman, 124–38. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Robert Leavitt, an education professor at the University of New Brunswick who has worked in teacher training for Aboriginal educators, emphasizes that the need to incorporate Native thought and culture into successful Native language programs is parallel to the incorporation of cultural awareness into any useful second language program. He notes that "[i]n comparing English-second-language and Native-second-language curricula, the teachers observed that both have cultural components; that is, students learn about the culture of people who speak English or a given Native language" (133).

- Kirkness, Verna J. 1998a. "The Critical State of Aboriginal Languages in Canada" [0101]. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 22.93–107.

Verna Kirkness, Professor Emerita at the University of British Columbia, describes the immediate need for action to be taken to stabilize and revitalize Aboriginal languages throughout Canada. She examines the existing legislative foundation upon which these actions can be taken, and proposes modifications that will make the process easier than it currently is. Within this examination, Kirkness reminds her audience that "[a]lthough language is often discussed apart from culture, it must be remembered that language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared and transmitted from generation to generation. Language evolves from those concepts with which a given culture interacts among its members and with the environment" (1998b: 102).

- Little Bear, Leroy. 2000. "Jagged Worldviews Colliding." *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, ed. by Marie Battiste, 77–85. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Leroy Little Bear, Professor Emeritus of Native Studies at the University of Lethbridge, analyzes the significant differences in worldview between Aboriginal Canadians and their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Echoing the thoughts of many other authors in the book in which his work appears (including editor Marie Battiste), he suggests that "[l]anguage embodies the way a society thinks. Through learning and speaking a particular language, an individual absorbs the collective thought process of a people" (78).

Support for the inclusion of cultural elements in language teaching comes not only from language professionals, but from other researchers in education and psychological development as well.

- Vygotsky, L. S. 1978. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

The eminent psychologist and child development specialist Lev Vygotsky notes the importance of transmitting language and culture from older members of a cultural group to younger members of that group. Through language, the more knowledgeable members provide the child with the frameworks necessary to interpret experience. Through interactions with more knowledgeable persons in the child's environment, language is converted to internal speech and reflective thought, allowing the child a mechanism to regulate behavior. In essence, the mediation of shared social symbols serves as a framework for interpreting experience, symbols that are internalized over time and transformed from their social form into verbal thought. With a change in mental functioning, a means to represent things that are not present (i.e., a name for objects or events) is provided. Language, then, is a tool that allows child and adult to construct a shared meaning, moving the child from a social level of consciousness to one that is psychological. It is the most powerful tool offered by culture for organizing experience, constituting realities and acquiring knowledge.

- Bruner, Jerome S. 1996. *The Culture of Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

In the nine essays collected in *The Culture of Education*, noted psychologist and educational philosopher Jerome Bruner asserts that “mind”—that is, the essences of human thought—cannot exist without culture. Mind is a reflection of a way of life that is represented by a shared symbolism of members of a cultural community, in which the social fabric of life is both construed and organized. This symbolic mode that represented a way of life is passed on to successive generations that sustain cultural identity and a way of life. The individual expression of culture is found in the meaning-making systems of the culture; cultural tools and symbols provide an interpretive lens for experience and provide the basis for cultural exchange. Language is one of these tools, but “[i]t is culture that provides the tools for organizing and understanding our worlds in communicable ways” (3).

- Sternberg, Robert J. 2003a. “Our research program validating the triarchic theory of successful intelligence: Reply to Gottfredson.” *Intelligence*, 31.399–413.
- Sternberg, Robert J. 2003b. *Wisdom, Intelligence, and Creativity Synthesized*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robert J. Sternberg, an eminent psychologist and educational researcher, describes a theory of “successful intelligence” that outlines the importance of practical, analytical and creative intelligence (as well as wisdom) in contributing to an individual's success in life. Within his writings, he recognizes the need to acknowledge and include elements of culture in students' education generally and their language education specifically. He writes of “one's ability to succeed according to what one values in life, within one's sociocultural context [by] adaptation to, shaping of, and selection of environments ... [and] by a blend of analytical, creative, and practical abilities” (2003a: 400). He also notes that “culture cannot be taught, in the context of

foreign-language learning, in the way it now often is—as an aside divorced from the actual learning of the language. It should be taught as an essential part of the language, as a primary context in which the language is embedded” (2003b: 167).

## Awareness of Cultural and Linguistic Assumptions

- Hinton, Leanne. 2001b. “Teaching Methods.” *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, ed. by Leanne Hinton, and Ken Hale, 179–89. San Diego: Academic Press.

Linguist Leanne Hinton, a co-founder of the American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI) and a key figure in California’s Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program, states that it is also important to remember that every language has its own grammatical patterns, and that a teaching approach that works for one language may not work for another language. She illustrates:

For example, some languages might have no noun plurals but would have ways of marking on the verb if more than one participant is involved. Some languages have no simple past separate from present tense. Some languages have verb stems that change in form depending on what affix is added. Some languages have special obligatory affixes for things an English speaker would never think of—such as evidentials, which are affixed to verbs in statements in order to communicate how the speaker knows what he is stating: whether he saw it, inferred it from indirect evidence, heard it from someone else, or learned it in some other way. Thus, what is important to teach in the way of grammar differs from language to language. (2001b: 185)

- Robert M. Leavitt, “Language and Cultural Content in Native Education.”

Leavitt outlines certain “fundamental differences” that both he and others have observed between English and many Aboriginal languages. He suggests that these differences—in ways of viewing the world, of categorizing and conceptualizing knowledge, of interpersonal interaction and of using language—should inform the way Aboriginal languages are taught to speakers (children or adults) whose first or dominant language is English. He gives an example from the East Coast language Maliseet:

[T]he English-speaking teacher will begin with the assumption that the moon and the wind are “things” which move, and whose appearance or strength changes with time. In contrast, Maliseet-speakers do not know the wind and the moon are things. There is no Maliseet noun ‘wind,’ but only a verb, which means ‘blow’ or ‘be windy.’ The wind is not a thing, but an action. It can be named only by expressing this action—as when it is performed by a character in a story.... The moon is also named by a Maliseet verb—*nipawset*, ‘walks at night.’ A multitude of other English nouns are expressed as verbs in Maliseet, including weather conditions, tides, land forms, and time. (130–31)

Leavitt provides a more detailed example of fundamental differences between languages and the thought patterns they represent with regards to colours and shapes, which are often thought to be universal and “obvious”:

In Native languages, such basic notions as the shape of concrete objects may be expressed in ways unfamiliar to speakers of English, allowing a more effective view of the world for certain purposes. In English, for example, speakers consider the shape of a basket or a tree-limb (e.g., square or cylindrical) separately from the object itself; that is, the designation of shape is based on arbitrary or idealized forms rather than on the properties of certain objects. Speakers of English imagine a square without picturing a particular square object. Even with non-geometrical “shapes” such as lump, it is possible to picture a lump not made of any particular substance. In contrast, in languages like Maliseet, a close relative of Micmac spoken in New Brunswick and Maine, speakers perceive shape as a property of the object in question; it is expressed only as part of the noun or verb denoting or referring to the object. No shape-names are whole words, and Maliseet-speakers do not ordinarily talk about shapes in isolation from the natural and manufactured objects around them. These different ways of thinking—Maliseet and English—are indicated not only in the lexicons, but also in the perceptions which form the basis of description. The single word *etutapskonuwat* (“he/she has very chubby cheeks”) is a verb which describes someone’s face by synthesizing the abstract concepts of “degree,” “shape (-*apsk-*),” “body part,” and “state of being.” In contrast, the English equivalent analyzes the face, expressing each idea—person, possession, degree, shape, body part—in a separate word. (129–30)

## 2. Aboriginal Language Pedagogy

### A. Instructional Strategies, Methods and Resources

#### Communication-based Language Instruction

Communication-based language instruction (CBI) “has as its focus natural communication between people” (Supahan and Supahan, 2001: 195). In its most all-encompassing form, “[the] CBI method involves the use of the targeted language in all instruction, in context, and in ways that communicate” (Supahan and Supahan, 2001: 195). Linguists, educators and community members seem to be in agreement on the usefulness of the CBI approach. As the noted sociolinguist and endangered language researcher Joshua Fishman notes, “Languages are not ‘subjects’ *per se* and they cannot be successfully acquired unless they are used for the purposes of active communication” (2001: 470). Gina Cantoni, Regents Professor of Education at Northern Arizona University, asserts that “it is essential that Native children learn to use their tribal language instead of just understanding it” (1999: 56). On the community front, Kenneth Paupanekis and David Westfall of Brandon University note that “a statement frequently made, especially by parents with reference to Native language programs, is that students should be learning how to use the language, not just learning words in isolation” (2001: 96). It has also been suggested that students often find communication-based instruction to be more interesting than language instruction based on rote memorization of set phrases. This point is memorably made by language educators Teresa McCarty and Rachel Schaffer: “Using a language to communicate is infinitely more interesting and creative than the repetition of drilled sequences stripped of context and intention. (Otherwise, a traveler to a foreign country could memorize a dictionary and grammar and get along splendidly—until the instant he or she must respond to an utterance not contained in the book.)” (1992: 119).

Note that communication-based learning, in the context that the authors examined here use the term, is not the same as content-based language teaching (CBLT). In their minds, CBLT—“the concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by, or, at least, influenced by content material” (Snow, 1999: 462)—is one possible way of focusing on developing students’ communication skills, but is not the only way. A discussion of CBLT as a pedagogical approach is included later in this section.

- Blanchard, Rosemary Ann, Charlie, Perfilliea, DeGroat, Jennie, Platero, Paul and Secatero, Shawn. 2003. “Borderlands of identity – Revitalizing language and cultural knowledge in a Navajo community living apart.” *Transcending Monolingualism: Linguistic Revitalisation in Education*, ed. by Leena Huss, Antoinette Camilleri Grima, and Kendall A. King, 193–223. Lisse, The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Rosemary Ann Blanchard, a cross-cultural researcher who has done extensive work with Navajo schools and educational organizations, conducted a series of interviews with individuals working on Navajo language revitalization projects in New Mexico. One of her interview subjects was Jennie DeGroat, the Navajo Language Resource Teacher for the Albuquerque Public School

District and a doctoral student in bilingual education at the University of New Mexico. Part of DeGroat's work involves developing oral language instruction methods aimed at reducing Native language loss among Navajo students. She describes her experiences with and observations of second language instruction in schools:

The way you typically learn a second language in school is not the way we learn to speak a language. When I first came into the district, I found that the Navajo language instructors were fluently bilingual. But, they had only limited knowledge of teaching strategies and they were using school-type lessons in teaching Navajo. The teachers used a lot of English words to explain things. They were teaching the way you would teach students to read English at an early stage, things like reading the calendar, saying the colours, learning to write out the names of numbers.

The problem with this approach is that it's not the way Navajo is actually used in day-to-day conversations. Since this isn't the way Navajo is used conversationally, students who are not Navajo speakers don't become speakers by learning how to recite their colours and write their numbers. They learn to become speakers by using Navajo in a conversational way in the kinds of everyday situations that Navajo speakers who speak Navajo at home use Navajo.

(213–14)

DeGroat's comments highlight learning a language by using the language in a realistic context of daily use and conversation.

- Marie Battiste, "Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society."

Battiste, elaborating on her proposals for incorporating Aboriginal culture and knowledge into both schools and societies, suggests that "[a]boriginal languages cannot be isolated in the way that politics or economics can be isolated in modern thought. Advocates of cultural studies argue that no person from another worldview can learn about other cultures except by being there and listening. (This is called 'fieldwork'.) Languages are said to be learned, not genetically encoded. Learning any language requires time and patience—one cannot simply use one's imagination to invent other cultural worlds, methods, and perceptions" (2000a: 205).

- Leanne Hinton, "Teaching Methods."

*The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice* was intended as a response to the 1993 UNESCO *Red Book on Endangered Languages*. The *Green Book*'s editors, linguists and Aboriginal language researchers, Leanne Hinton of the University of California at Berkeley and the late Ken Hale of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, have gathered short chapters from numerous authors on the processes, challenges and successes experienced by those who wish to maintain minority languages as vibrant communicative and cultural elements in their communities.



In outlining eight key factors involved in teaching endangered languages, Hinton places communication-based teaching and learning at the top of her list:

- (1) If the goal is to develop oral competence, the main method of teaching should be oral (rather than written).
- (2) Language lessons should be ‘immersion’ style, where the target language is used solely, without English translation. Still the learners must be able to understand, at least partly, what is being said, through contextual clues. Thus, the teacher must use gestures, miming, actions, pictures, and so on, to make himself or herself understood. (This is called ‘comprehensible input.’). [This term comes from the work of Stephen D. Krashen; see, for example, his 1983 book with Tracy D. Terrell, *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall).]
- (3) Learners need to be engaged in real communication efforts, rather than just hearing and spouting [sic] language. Learning lists of words alone does not help a person learn how to communicate. (For example, you do not just teach students a list of kinship terms; once you show them the vocabulary, you immediately engage them in communicative activities such as having them ask each other to tell who their family members at home are). Communication-based teaching and learning leads to much more thorough learning of vocabulary and of grammar. (2001b: 183–4)

Hinton also addresses the concerns parents sometimes express about grammar instruction being neglected in communication-focused language learning programs:

Teaching grammar can be implicit rather than explicit... Many endangered languages have no grammatical analyses available anyway, or perhaps only linguistic grammars, which are not geared the same way that teaching grammars would be. The only speakers who are available to teach the language may not have any explicit grammatical knowledge (that is, they may not know what counts as a noun, verb, or relative clause, or what a prefix or suffix is), even though they have mastered the grammar of their language as native speakers. Thus they may not be able to explain the grammar very much. It is therefore important to remember that grammar can be taught without explicit grammatical analysis. (2001b: 183–4)

- Diffey, Norman. 1992. “Second-Language Curriculum Models and Program Design: Recent Trends in North America” [Spr 0301]. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17.208–19.

University of Windsor professor Norman Diffey provides an overview of the impact of communicative-based second language instruction on classroom practices and curriculum development. He suggests that within a CBI model, “[c]ulture provides a particularly rich source of ‘worthwhile content’ and has come to be viewed as an essential rather than incidental component of the second-language curriculum” (214).

## Communication-Based Language Teaching Strategies

### Language Proficiency Method

- Bennett, Ruth. 2002. "Teaching Reading with Puppets." *Aboriginal Languages Across the Community*, ed. by Barbara Burnaby, and Jon Reyhner, 151–59. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.
- Supahan, Terry and Supahan, Sarah E. 2001. "Teaching Well, Learning Quickly: Communication-Based Language Instruction." *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, ed. by Leanne Hinton, and Ken Hale, 195–97. San Diego: Academic Press.

Ruth Bennett, a Shawnee and an Ethnographic Researcher at the Center for Indian Community Development, and Terry and Sarah E. Supahan, Karuk educators in California, describe their use of the Language Proficiency Method in their work. This is a five- or six-stage ladder technique that gradually transitions language teaching from being teacher-initiated to being student-initiated. Bennett outlines the method, as she has used it in teaching Shawnee, as follows:

The Language Proficiency Method described here puts many reading strategies together. In addition to a question-answer approach and the sequencing from easy to difficult questions, this method emphasizes communication-based reading strategies, such as oral reading, group reading out loud, taking turns reading, and reading within peer groups.... At each stage, there is teacher-initiated language use, teacher questions and student responses, or student initiated language use. (2002: 152)

The Supahans describe the method as highly dependent on modelling: "When we teach greetings and conversational language to our students we spend a portion of every class greeting each other and carrying on conversations—modeling what we will later have the students do.... It is important to note, however, that this method never forces students to produce speech before they are ready" (Supahan and Supahan, 2001: 196).

Bennett and the Supahans have four steps in common in their descriptions of the Language Proficiency Method:

1. Setting the scene. Initial introductions vary. The teacher may describe the sequence of learning and what to expect in each stage of the lesson. The teacher uses flashcards, note cards, audiotapes, and other aids to catch students' attention.
2. Comprehensible input. The teacher asks easy questions where students demonstrate comprehension but do not have to respond verbally. If they do respond verbally, they need only respond with "yes" or "no."
3. Guided practice. Students respond with yes or no by repeating what the teacher has said or by answering either-or questions.
4. Independent practice. Students supply the vocabulary term in answering the teacher's questions. Students may formulate words, phrases, and sentences. (Bennett, 2002: 152)

The Supahans then conclude their method with assessment (which they note “can take many forms and may be an ongoing process” (2001: 197)), whereas Bennett has two steps beyond the independent practice stage:

5. Challenge. Here, students initiate activities. They read stories from their oral tradition, perform plays adapted from the stories, or they play games designed from vocabulary in the lesson. (2002: 152)
6. An optional expansion stage, including things such as reading beyond the curriculum or participating in community activities that encourage spontaneous use of the language.

### **Content-based Language Teaching (CBLT)**

Content-based language teaching (CBLT) in general is discussed extensively in a 2004 literature review of second language education prepared by John Archibald, Sylvie Roy and researchers at the University of Calgary’s Language Research Centre for Alberta Education. Readers are encouraged to explore the information presented in this report, but a brief summary of their major findings regarding CBLT is included here (cf. Archibald et al., 2004: 24–37):

- There are a number of models of CBLT, from total immersion in early years (where all instruction in all subjects is in the second language), to partial immersion, to having certain courses taught in the second language, to second language courses using varying degrees of thematic content. These models exist on a continuum, with a focus on content at one end and a focus on language at the other. “Theme-based models are the CBLT structures most commonly associated with L2 classrooms where less time is devoted to L2 study than in immersion” (Archibald et al., 2004: 26).
- CBLT is an effective way to encourage the development of second language skills, particularly in learning situations where students have limited proficiency in the second language and where only a limited amount of time is devoted to the study of that language. CBLT also allows students to master the content being presented in the second language, even though they are not native-like in their proficiency in the language.
- Attention does need to be paid to the development of grammatical accuracy in CBLT contexts; this can be effectively done through “integrated teaching of language structures and vocabulary” (Archibald et al., 2004: 24).
- “Ultimately, one of the main benefits of content-based language teaching is its ability to encourage students to make connections between second-language study and the outside world. This, in turn, can increase motivation and reinforce learning across the curriculum” (Archibald et al., 2004: 24).

An “immersion approach” in teaching Aboriginal languages is advocated whenever possible and/or feasible by a number of the authors examined here, notably Norbert Francis and Jon Reyhner (2002), Hinton (2001b) and McCarty (2003), as well as Michael Krauss of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks (1996), Andrea Bear Nicholas of St. Thomas University (2001) and Steve Greymorning of the University of Montana (1997). Others discuss approaches that tend more toward the theme-based instruction end of the CBLT continuum. For example,

Brandon University faculty members Kenneth Paupanekis (a Cree from the Norway House First Nation) and David Westfall note that

a few [Aboriginal language] teachers create their own materials based on what is being taught in the regular academic program. Few Native language teachers, however, collaborate with regular classroom teachers to find out what is actually being taught in the regular academic program and then use this information to create the content for the Native language program. Such an approach can create a situation where scientific and social concepts being taught to the students in the regular program are reinforced in the Native language program, an important pedagogic strategy that has been proven effective. (2001: 97)

This perspective is also held by Gina Cantoni, who suggests that “all teachers should develop an integrated approach to language across the curriculum, building on what the learners bring to the classroom from their out-of-school experience and from other classes, especially those on Native language and culture” (1997: 7).

Linguists and educators Teresa McCarty and Rachel Schaffer suggest the incorporation of themes relevant to Aboriginal communities as another effective method of Aboriginal language teaching.

For example, collaborative research on such topics as local history, geography, flora, fauna, institutions, and people enable students and teachers to interact with community members about issues of mutual interest and relevance. By interviewing community members, discussing their findings with others, relating those findings to correlative materials in books, and then writing about their experiences and publishing the results, students have opportunities to develop their oral and written language abilities in both the native language and English, and to deepen their understanding of themselves and the local natural and social world while learning “new” academic content. (1992: 123–24)

### **Language Teaching Practices: Routine Classroom Activities**

- Francis, Norbert and Reyhner, Jon Allan. 2002. *Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education: A Bilingual Approach*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Leanne Hinton, “Teaching Methods.”

Both Hinton (2001b: 185) and Northern Arizona University teachers and teacher educators Norbert Francis and Jon Reyhner (2002: 113) stress that there are many everyday organizational and administrative activities in the classroom that can be done in the second language: greetings and leave-takings; calling roll; collecting and distributing books, worksheets, materials and supplies; organizing seating and groups for activities and lining up to leave. While there may not be exact translations in the Aboriginal language for the English phrases associated with these activities, equivalents can likely be found. The repetitive and predictable nature of these activities, and the actions associated with them, makes them reasonably easy patterns for students to recognize and learn early in the process of acquiring the language.

## Total Physical Response (TPR)

The total physical response (TPR) method, developed by James Asher in the 1960s, is a widely-used methodology that allows students to develop their understanding of a second language before they can speak it. Information on and resources for this method can be found at [www.tpr-world.com](http://www.tpr-world.com). In this method, a teacher will make a simple request or command in the second language—such as “stand up,” “sit down,” “walk” or “jump”—and will demonstrate the action themselves. The students will then perform the action as well, and will begin to associate that action with the word or phrase corresponding to it in the second language. They can also demonstrate their understanding of what the teacher is requesting simply by performing the action.

TPR has been successfully used in teaching many different languages to both children and adults, including Aboriginal languages.

- Norbert Francis and Jon Reyhner, *Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education*.

In the chapter of their book entitled *The Bilingual Classroom*, Francis and Reyhner discuss techniques of immersion language learning that could be used in nonimmersion Aboriginal language classrooms as well. They note that TPR avoids one of the problems of the early period of second language learning: “Since at the beginning students are not yet able to produce even simple sentences or phrases in the [second language], most if not all the talking in class is dominated by the teacher. Requesting nonverbal responses gets students engaged in meaningful exchanges in the very first day” (115).

- Littlebear, Richard E. 1992b. “American Indian Bilingual Education: TPR Works!” *NABE News* (<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/OtherNABE.html#2>), vol. 15, no. 6. Retrieved July 17, 2005.

Richard Littlebear, President of Chief Dull Knife College on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana, provides an overview of the effectiveness of total physical response in Aboriginal language teaching. He notes that TPR has been used to teach the Cheyenne language and has been successfully incorporated into language teaching programs in Alaska and Montana (1992b).

- Cantoni, Gina P. 1999. “Using TPR-Storytelling To Develop Fluency and Literacy in Native American Languages.” *Revitalizing Indigenous Languages*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, Gina Cantoni, Robert N. St. Clair, and Evangeline Parsons Yazzie, 53–58. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

In her examination of effective ways to engage Aboriginal students in learning their traditional mother tongue, Cantoni notes that “[s]everal Native American teachers and teacher-trainers have created TPR lessons to introduce their tribal language to the children who have not learned it at home, and these efforts are usually very successful; they allow learners to indicate comprehension non-verbally, keeping the affective filter low” (56). Cantoni particularly advocates an extension of TPR called TPR-Storytelling (TPR-S). Her claim is that this method allows students to demonstrate knowledge early in the learning process, become active participants in their learning process, and learn without the need for textbooks; thus, she notes that TPR-S has become popular among Aboriginal teachers in the United States. In TPR-S, students use the vocabulary they have learned in their early lessons—walking, jumping, pointing, etc.—by incorporating it into stories, which they “hear, watch, act out, retell, revise, read, write, and rewrite” (54). The telling of these stories can be aided by the use of gestures, pictures, props (toys, labels), etc. As students progress, more stories can be introduced, and more vocabulary can be added to students’ repertoire. The end products of TPR-S lessons could include videotapes, bulletin boards, booklets that students in lower grades could use, dramatic presentations, etc.

While TPR-S may seem like an exercise in memorization (which the communication-based approach to language teaching discourages), children are not required to memorize the stories word for word; in fact, original variations and reconstructions are encouraged. Ideally, says Cantoni, “The ultimate goal is to have children develop original stories and share them with others. TPR-S emphasizes a positive, collaborative, and supportive classroom climate in which Native American children can develop increasingly complex skills in speaking, reading, and writing their tribal language. In addition, the stories, illustrations, and audio cassettes students can produce in TPR-S are a valuable addition to the scarce pool of Native-language materials available today” (58).

## **Experiential Learning**

In David A. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), learning is defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984: 41). Both concrete experience (doing) and abstract reflection on that experience (thinking)—that is, transforming the experience into something personally meaningful to the student—are necessary for the process to be successful: “Simple perception of experience alone is not sufficient for learning; something must be done with it. Similarly, transformation alone cannot represent learning, for there must be something to be transformed, some state or experience that is being acted upon” (Kolb, 1984: 42). Although these ideas were originally applied to adult learners, ELT has increasingly been incorporated into elementary and secondary education, and applied to all subjects, including second language teaching.

Few of the authors examined here referred directly to experiential learning in their works. Indeed, they seem to take for granted that for second language learning to be successful, students must learn to use the language for communication—through conversation, reading, writing, etc. In addition, learning by experience is frequently discussed as being the heart of Aboriginal education; as the former Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference Sheila Watt-Cloutier states,

“In our Native heritage, learning and living were the same thing, and knowledge, judgment, and skill could never be separated” (2000: 118).

- Cummins, Jim. 1992. “The Empowerment of Indian Students.” *Teaching American Indian Students*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, 3–12. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.

Jim Cummins, the head of the Modern Languages program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, contributes the initial essay to Jon Reyhner’s wide-ranging handbook *Teaching American Indian Students*. In this essay, he gives the following assessment of the place of experiential learning in language education:

The dominant instructional model in most Western industrial societies has been termed a ‘transmission’ model.... This model can be contrasted with an ‘experiential-interactive’ model of teaching. The basic premise of the transmission model is that the task of teachers is to impart knowledge or skills they possess to their students who do not yet have these skills. This implies that teachers initiate and control the interaction, constantly orienting it toward the achievement of instructional objectives.

An experiential-interactive model of instruction focuses on giving students hands-on (‘context-embedded’) classroom experiences that provide students with a basis for understanding more abstract (‘context-reduced’) academic curricula. A transmission model of teaching contravenes central principles of language and literacy acquisition; a model allowing for reciprocal interaction between teacher and students represents a more appropriate alternative. (8)

Cummins also elaborates on the “interactive” half of the model, which includes things such as student-to-student interaction in addition to “genuine” student-teacher interaction, collaborative learning contexts, the use of “meaningful” language rather than a focus on the prescriptive correctness of forms, and a focus on developing higher-level cognitive skills—that is, not grading a student based solely on their observed skills in factual recall.

- Robert M. Leavitt, “Language and Cultural Content in Native Education.”

Leavitt reminds his readers that experiential learning, although it has not been called by that name in the past, has always been an essential tenet of Aboriginal education. “In Native communities, parents and [E]lders maintain the integration of knowledge as they teach younger people by sharing experiences with them... Children participate in the daily activities of adults, instead of practicing in an artificial setting like a classroom” (132). Based on this observation, he suggests that

[t]eachers of Native students will want to inquire about the best situations for conversation, the most natural methods of description and classification, and the real functions of language in their students’ lives. They will want to let students integrate their experiences, spiritual beliefs, and social values with what they read and hear. Using this

approach to language, teachers will be able to help Native students find their way into the continuum of interconnections between the generations, between people and the world about them, between the knowledge of individuals and that of the community (133).

He also emphasizes the need to incorporate experience beyond the classroom into language teaching: “Children will also benefit from participating in meaningful projects outside the classroom. School becomes a place where in daily life they become better and better at all the skills required by their community—in the present and in the future” (132).

- Begay, Sara L., Jimmie, Mary and Lockard, Louise. 2003. “Oral History Shares the Wealth of a Navajo Community.” *Nurturing Native Languages*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, Octavia V. Trujillo, Roberto Luis Carrasco and Louise Lockard, 149–54. Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

Kindergarten to Grade 3 students at two schools on the Navajo Nation in Arizona took part in a collaborative project investigating the history of their communities, involving interviews with community members, archival photographs and primary history documents. “As they explored place names and questioned community members, students identified their Navajo language as an important resource in interpreting local historical events” (149). In their report to the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium in 2001, the students’ teachers noted that “these Navajo language oral history projects provide students with experiential learning in which the values of ‘place’ and culture are reinforced in a community setting” (153).

### **Oral Narrative: Legends, Stories and Poetry**

For almost all of their history, most Aboriginal languages have been oral languages. Most elements of these cultures are transmitted from generation to generation through oral means: stories, legends and poems. This body of oral literature provides a tremendous resource to Aboriginal language teachers and fits well within the framework of current educational practices; as Joyce Silverthorne, a teacher and former member of the Montana Board of Public Education, reminds readers, “[t]o teach by storytelling is a central tenet of whole language instruction” (1997: 113). In fact, many of the writers examined suggest that it would potentially be a huge oversight to neglect these elements of Aboriginal language and culture.

- Littlebear, Richard E. 1996. “Preface to Stabilizing Indigenous Languages.” *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages*, ed. by Gina P. Cantoni, xiii–xv. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

Littlebear was invited to contribute the preface to the printed proceedings of the 1994 and 1995 Stabilizing Indigenous Languages symposia at Northern Arizona University. In his personal and poetic contribution, he suggests that “teaching our languages as if they had no oral tradition is one factor which contributes to the failures of our Native American language teaching programs...” (xiii).



- Ayoungman, Vivian. 1995. "Native Language Renewal: Dispelling the Myths, Planning for the Future" [Win 1201]. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 19.183–87.

Vivian Ayoungman, former director of education for the Treaty Seven Tribal Council (now the Treaty Seven Management Corporation), was a contributor to the discussion of Indigenous language and literacy education in a 1995 special issue of the *Bilingual Research Journal*. In her comments, which focus on the situation in Southern Alberta, she states the importance of incorporating the oral tradition into Aboriginal language education, adding that "the significance of oral tradition cannot be underestimated, for as our [E]lders say, this embodies our history and values" (186).

- Norbert Francis and Jon Reyhner, *Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education*.

Drawing on their experience in Native language classrooms across the Western United States and in Mexico, Francis and Reyhner are perhaps the most vocal supporters of the use of traditional oral material in the classroom. They state that "[e]thnographers and students of folklore have described in detail and extensively analyzed the literary aspects of oral tradition. Given the broad consensus on its artistic merits, the relative under-utilization of this resource in the educational domain represents a major missed opportunity.... Traditional stories in both oral and written form fulfill all the requirements for high-quality literature that students need to begin the task of building their academic language skills in general and literacy in particular" (133–34).

They further suggest that "[t]raditional discourses (the more highly structured and abstract uses of language of the oral tradition) develop higher-order discourse abilities and cognitive proficiencies which children can apply to academic tasks in any language they learn" (52). These abilities were given the name Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (abbreviated CALP) by researchers in the 1980s. Francis and Reyhner propose that "[c]hildren who have had the benefit of extensive contact with these oral genres will have acquired and stored CALP-type language proficiencies and, given the opportunity, will be able to apply them to school and literacy-related language tasks: (1) applying these proficiencies, learned through the oral medium, to *literacy* in the [I]ndigenous language, (2) applying the *same* proficiencies (because they are not language specific) to higher-order language tasks in general, both oral and written, in both the IL [Indigenous language] and the NL [national language, i.e., English]" (94). Thus, exposure to traditional stories, legends and poetry in the Aboriginal language will help students in many aspects of their schooling. Finally, Francis and Reyhner believe that using traditional materials in a school setting can also be beneficial for the revitalization of the language: "The very concept of creating institutional school functions for the [I]ndigenous language implies reclaiming and revitalizing traditional discourses" (52).

Further, it should not be discounted that using traditional stories and legends in the classroom will connect Aboriginal children with their heritage. Francis and Reyhner suggest that "when discourse patterns that correspond to the children's experience with [I]ndigenous oral forms are recognized and incorporated into the school-based literacy program, discontinuities between community and classroom begin to break down" (53). Francis and Reyhner also suggest that

“students will benefit from numerous repetitions of the same story. This is because, for each telling, there still remain various aspects of the plot, and this or that vocabulary item or grammatical structure, which are beyond their current level of L2 proficiency. With each retelling, new aspects of the narrative are revealed; something different emerges, and new language structures are either assimilated outright, or come to the foreground to be examined by the learner” (106).

Francis and Reyhner further suggest a number of activities that can be used to follow up these stories and solidify students’ language learning:

- Retelling: “With or without visual context support, and depending on the needs of the students, the class can ‘retell’ the narrative, composing their own written versions. This activity lends itself well to small writers’ circles, where students collaborate to arrive at: (1) one version, prepared by a recorder, which represents the consensus of the group, or (2) individual products that reflect group discussion and reflection.... Retelling is not a mechanical, rote-memory type, language task” (147–48).
- Creating artwork: Francis and Reyhner focus on younger children (approximately early primary) and on pictures, but the creation of a variety of artwork to explore the themes of a story can be a valuable learning tool at any age.
- Creating students’ own stories: Again, Francis and Reyhner focus on younger students, but having students create their own stories could be useful at any level. “In the process of mentally formulating and then narrating a story, for the purpose of writing it down, children intuitively begin to make modifications that take into account not only the needs of the scribe, but also begin to reflect more deliberately on the form and structure of their discourse. Children start to think of their verbal expression in terms of *composing*, creating a text” (150–51).
- Cloze exercises: Cloze is the systematic deletion of words from a text, with several word choices made available as the option to fill in the blank. Cloze exercises make students focus on text comprehension and aspects of sentence structure (in particular, grammar and meaning relationships), lend themselves well to cooperative learning group work, and can be easily constructed and produced by teachers (153–54).

### **Using Transcriptions of Oral Narratives and Other Written Materials**

- Heredia, Armando and Francis, Norbert. 1997. “Coyote as Reading Teacher: Oral Tradition in the Classroom.” *Teaching Indigenous Languages*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, 46–55. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

Armando Heredia, an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor and coordinator of Native American and Migrant summer school programs in Arizona, collaborated with Norbert Francis on an examination of the importance of including Indigenous oral traditions in language programs, which was presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages conference

in 1997. One of their key points is that educators need to recognize and acknowledge the difference between oral narratives and the written versions of those narratives:

[T]ranscribed and edited versions of oral narrative are not meant to capture the singularly interactive features of face-to-face performance. On the one hand, the formal and artistic genres of traditional cultures approximate in significant ways the planned, and peculiarly structured discourse that characterizes most (but, again, not all) written expression. And on the other hand, edited versions, in print (which need not in any fundamental way imply the displacement of oral forms) offer the reader/listener new options. (48)

- Norbert Francis and Jon Reyhner, *Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education*.

In the chapter entitled “Biliteracy: Teaching Reading and Writing in the Indigenous Language,” Francis and Reyhner argue that traditional oral materials can be presented in both their original form and in their less traditional written forms. “There need be no opposition between preserving the practices of oral performance and working with this same body of literature in written form in school. In fact, we argue, each narrative form can complement the other. In the classroom, both kinds of language activity [i.e., oral and written] are necessary ingredients of children’s literacy and academic language development” (135).

#### Orthographic Disputes

When written materials (whether transcribed narratives or other types of materials) are used, attention must be paid to the orthography used in creating these materials. For some Aboriginal languages (e.g., Cree), a number of writing systems have been created by various agencies (missionaries, linguists, etc.). Because of this, disagreements have sometimes arisen over which orthography to use in written materials. The orthographic concerns, however, need not affect the process of incorporating both oral and written material in the second language programs.

- Norbert Francis and Jon Reyhner, *Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education*.

Francis and Reyhner have noted two guiding principles regarding written materials in Indigenous language programs in Mexico (where Francis has teaching and research experience):

- a) [A]lphabets and other word-processing technologies correspond to the practical, classroom settings where children ... will be learning how to read and write. Practical alphabets are to be designed that avoid unnecessary graphic complexity.
- b) Every attempt should be made to unify criteria among different dialects of each language to arrive at common spelling patterns. (132)

- Linn, Mary S., Naranjo, Tessie, Nicholas, Sheilah, Slaughter, Inee, Yamamoto, Akira and Zepeda, Ofelia. 2002. “Awakening the Languages. Challenges of Enduring Language Programs: Field Reports from 15 Programs from Arizona, New Mexico and Oklahoma.” *Indigenous Languages Across the Community*, ed. by Barbara Burnaby, and Jon Reyhner, 105–25. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

Mary S. Linn and her colleagues with the Indigenous Language Institute (ILI) visited Native language education programs in three American states. The programs they examined differed in terms of language taught, size of community served, organization sponsoring the program, age of learners and style of class. Based on their observations, Linn and her colleagues recommend a balance between focusing on the oral tradition and introducing material written in the Native language: “Tribal languages are traditionally oral, and successful language programs will emphasize spoken language through the oral traditions of story telling, prayers, humour, and skilful oratory. However, they will also create quickly (and without too much argument) an alphabet or system of syllabics to use as a teaching tool or as an aid in some preservation projects” (119).

- Dauenhauer, Nora Marks and Dauenhauer, Richard. 1998. “Technical, Emotional, and Ideological Issues in Reversing Language Shift: Examples from Southeast Alaska.” *Endangered Languages: Current Issues and Future Prospects*, ed. by Lenore A. Grenoble, and Lindsay J. Whaley, 57–98. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alaskan researchers and educators Richard and Nora Marks Dauenhauer have provided a report on the efforts that they and others have made to maintain the Tlingit language as a vibrant element of Southeast Alaskan Tlingit life. Their major point is that an Aboriginal community must be intimately involved in the projects undertaken to reinvigorate its language, whether inside or outside the formal education system. As part of their work, the Dauenhauers give suggestions as to how to make these projects more successful. One of their recommendations is that it is better not to translate oral materials into English for use in Aboriginal second language classes. They put the translation concern very succinctly: “Stories may survive in English, but the untranslatable elements of style will be lost: the puns, the word plays, some of the concepts, and the language itself” (74).

### **Oral Narratives: Considerations**

Because of their spiritual significance, not all traditional narratives will be appropriate for classroom use.

- Friesen, John W. and Friesen, Virginia Lyons. 2002. *Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Plea for Integration*. Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises.

While John and Virginia Friesen believe that Aboriginal knowledge must be incorporated into Canadian society as a whole, they remind their readers that there is no blanket “Aboriginal culture.” Thus, it will not be appropriate to take a legend or story from one culture and use it for teaching all Aboriginal languages. They write that “[t]here is a great deal of overlap among legends of varying plains tribes, for example, but often two versions of the same story in the same tribe might only have the same beginning in common. Then each version would digress” (75).

- Nora M. and Richard Dauenhauer, “Technical, Emotional, and Ideological Issues in Reversing Language Shift.”

Because their report emphasizes the importance of each Aboriginal community in the maintenance of its own language, the Dauenhauers remind readers that those who may be seen as the “keepers” of the language—the Elders in general, and particularly the noted storyteller—must be involved in and recognized by the revitalization projects. While Aboriginal stories are often thought to be “folk tales” with no “author” by non-Aboriginal people, this is not always the case. Often, there is a particular person in a tribe who is charged with the passing on of stories. In many cases, it would be appropriate to credit the storyteller, as the Dauenhauers (91) have done in their printed work: “An important feature of our publications (acceptable to the storytellers) is that we do not ‘retell’ or ‘rewrite’ stories, but offer the Tlingit text transcribed from their oral performance along with an English translation of the text, and with the tradition bearer clearly identified and featured in a biography that includes photographs.”

### **Using Technology to Teach Aboriginal Languages**

Some researchers and educators have discussed the possibility of using technology—computers, Web sites, CD-ROMs, DVDs, audio media, etc.—as a way to teach Aboriginal languages. Technology, if used wisely, can play a key role in teaching these languages, as Maori educator Te Tuhi Robust writes: “Indigenous groups with access to tools of information and communication technology can use them to cross boundaries and also to enhance their learning capabilities, to gain knowledge, adapt, and control. However, for them to take this journey and use the tools to achieve their goals by modifying existing arrangements they need the space to explore the medium, to set goals, and evaluate their usefulness for their own situations” (2002: 2).

None of the literature examined advocated focusing solely on a technological approach in teaching Aboriginal languages, but instead advises teachers and curriculum developers to use technology as one of many techniques for language teaching. Elizabeth Yeoman (see below) encourages Aboriginal language teachers to incorporate the traditional Aboriginal technique of learning from Elders. Shirley Williams’ (2002) CD-ROM project was one of a series of materials—including crossword puzzles, anagrams, word searches, flash cards and cassettes—

designed to accompany Ojibway language texts. In short, the authors recommend that technology not be perceived as a “magic wand” for Aboriginal language teaching. Further, they remind their readers that any technological resources used in teaching Aboriginal languages should adhere to a high level of quality.

- Yeoman, Elizabeth. 2000. “Aboriginal Language-Learning in Cyberspace: A Typology of Language-Related Web Sites and Their Potential Uses” [0101]. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 24.120–33.

Elizabeth Yeoman of Memorial University undertook a survey of approximately 20 Web sites and Web-based resources devoted to Aboriginal language learning and teaching. She notes that the Internet has a number of potential uses in terms of language learning, including serving as a source of material through existing or proposed lexical and grammatical Web sites, as well as providing a means of materials dissemination for those teachers who create material; stimulating communication in the Aboriginal language through e-mail, chat rooms, conferencing, etc.; allowing the addition of multimedia (sound, pictures) to language learning; and illustrating the “multiplicity and diversity” (128) of Aboriginal languages to students. “Language-learners must be involved in personally meaningful communication through the medium of the Aboriginal language. Lexical and grammatical Web sites ... can be useful resources to draw on to enable such communication to take place.... Their potential for enabling speakers and learners of Aboriginal languages at many different sites to share their knowledge and resources, to converse with each other, and to keep records for the future is exciting” (128–29).

Yeoman further suggests that there may even be some advantages to computer-mediated learning: “(a) it tends to be informal, and for language learners in classroom situations it might sometimes allow students who are not comfortable with speaking out to feel more comfortable participating in a discussion; (b) computer conferencing can allow many people to share thoughts and ideas, thus potentially stimulating further exploration and reflection that might not otherwise occur. At the same time, e-mail still permits transmission of private messages to one or a number of individuals should this be desirable....” (128–29).

In some cases, Yeoman believes that students could become involved in materials development through the Internet, which could give them a strong feeling of ownership in their work as a language learner. “One Aboriginal language curriculum specialist promoted the project of encouraging language students (in this case Labrador Inuktitut) to ask community Elders how to say various phrases the teacher did not know, then developing a collective lexicon based on the students’ research for future curriculum use (Sophie Tuglavina, Labrador East School Board, personal communication). Such resources could be made much more widely available through the Internet. They could also enable teachers and learners to examine regional differences in language use, share their resources, and deepen their knowledge of the richness of the language” (128). If this type of project is undertaken, Yeoman continues, “it may be helpful to consider the following curricular and linguistic issues. It is important for learners to have common goals and topics of interest to discuss online, as in person. These might include language research such as the research suggested by Sophie Tuglavina above or other investigations ranging from local

geography, traditions, and customs, to collective problem-solving and collaborative story-writing, to informal discussion of books, movies, or other topics” (129).

At the time that Yeoman’s article was published in 2000, she noted that most of the sites she had examined “would need to be extensively developed” before they could play a central role in Indigenous language education, “but there is at least a beginning” (128). She cautions that the possible perception of less-developed sites as unprofessional or uninteresting could have a detrimental effect on students’ perception of Aboriginal languages: “...if sites that provide lexical resources remain at the present fragmentary sample stage of most, there is a risk that they may have the opposite effect and serve to present the languages as artifacts or curiosities rather than as living languages. It would, therefore, be crucial that teachers present such sites as ongoing developmental resources that their students can both draw on and contribute to” (128).

- Buszard-Welcher, Laura. 2001. “Can the Web Help Save My Language?” *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, ed. by Leanne Hinton, and Ken Hale, 331–45. San Diego: Academic Press.

Another survey of endangered languages, conducted by Laura Buszard-Welcher of the University of California at Berkeley, examined 50 Web sites, analyzing the sites based on the creators’ and users’ backgrounds and motives, as well as on the content and presentation of the sites. As a result of her wide-ranging observations, Buszard-Welcher suggests that multimedia can be very engaging for language learners: “For language learning, it is important to hear the language, better to see and hear it used in context, and best to be able to use it in context. The new multimedia technologies make it increasingly easier to hear, see and use language and reduce the need for reliance on literacy for language transmission on the Web” (337).

However, Buszard-Welcher echoes Yeoman’s observation that many of the Internet resources available at the time she wrote (2001) were not at a stage where they were suitable for classroom use. She notes that “a skeptical observer might point out that few endangered-language Web sites have substantial amounts of language content, and what content there is seems to mostly consist of short lists of vocabulary, words and phrases presented out of context—hardly the ideal way to learn to speak a language” (343).

- Kroskrity, Paul V. and Reynolds, Jennifer. 2001. “On Using Multimedia in Language Renewal: Observations from Making the CD-ROM *Taitaduhaan*.” *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, ed. by Leanne Hinton, and Ken Hale, 317–29. San Diego: Academic Press.

University of California at Los Angeles anthropologists Paul V. Kroskrity and Jennifer Reynolds report on the process of creating a CD-ROM *Taitaduhaan* to assist in the revitalization of the Western Mono language. They discuss in some depth the creative and technical requirements for undertaking such a project, as well as the ways in which community members can be involved. One of their proposals is that the multimedia aspects of technology can be of particular use in language learning programs. They note that “multimedia projects offer a unique opportunity to

create curriculum materials which are recipient-designed for the community. Because these projects can incorporate the aesthetic forms of Native American communities, they provide a means of creating curricular materials that are centered on the language and culture of a particular community” (328).

Kroskrity and Reynolds caution that “[t]hough it can increase opportunities to see and hear the ancestral language—especially in those communities where there are very few speakers—this technology is clearly not a quick fix for language renewal programs but rather an additional resource which needs to be developed in addition to other strategies for language maintenance. It definitely requires a long-term commitment of funds, supplies, and personnel in order to yield results” (328).

- Bennett, Ruth. 2003. “Saving a Language with Computers, Tape Recorders, and Radio.” *Nurturing Native Languages*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, Octaviana V. Trujillo, Roberto Luis Carrasco and Louise Lockard, 59–78. Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

In addition to looking at various ways of incorporating computers into Indigenous language teaching, researcher Ruth Bennett discusses the possibility of using radio programs created by students as a way of facilitating the learning of Indigenous languages, especially of what she calls “quality” or “authentic” language. “Teachers increase the amount of language their students are exposed to by designing projects that require students to reach for new words.... Radio programs generate an increase in language and promote the use of quality language used in propelling students to be aware of an audience of listeners” (60). These effects occur at various points in the preparation and presentation of the programs. “Students use and practice language while preparing for radio shows. Real-time radio conversations allow students to practice listening and speaking in a context where they are motivated to do their best” (61).

- Nora M. and Richard Dauenhauer, “Technical, Emotional, and Ideological Issues in Reversing Language Shift.”

Within the context of their examination of the many elements involved in successful Tlingit language education, the Dauenhauers remind their readers that technology will not be a quick fix in revitalizing Aboriginal languages. “These are useful tools, and they greatly change the dimensions and possibilities for documentation and instruction, but they are no substitute for human desire and effort” (70–71).



## Resources

### Creating Resources for Language Teaching

While there are curriculum resources available for some of Alberta's Indigenous languages, there are other languages for which few (if any) instructional materials exist. Thus, it will likely be necessary for resource development to be undertaken, either by teachers themselves, community members or other professionals.

- Ruth Bennett, "Saving a Language with Computers, Tape Recorders, and Radio."

Bennett outlines an eleven-step method that has been used to create language lessons through working with Hupa Elders and other community members during community language classes in the Hoopa Valley in California.

#### Create a context for language

1. *Establish the setting* in which recording of the language will occur. In Bennett's example, it was a community language class. A topic was chosen for each session, and Elders decided how to say certain things in Hupa (sometimes there was more than one possibility).
2. *Record relevant information* using both audio technology (tape recorder, mini-disk, hard disk recording) and in writing.

#### Present a language lesson in the classroom

3. *Make literal translations* of each expression given, as well as free translations. "This builds in a way of discussing the grammar of the expressions" (70).
4. *Explain the translation process*: "As you are writing down the literal translations, explain the components of the translation process. Avoid confusion when presenting component parts of words by explaining that literal meanings of native words do not necessarily make it possible to predict free English translations" (71).
5. *Document translations*, which could involve creating a language database.
6. *Move on from one task to the next*: "After one set of expressions, then go on to the next expression. Keep the lesson on track while being respectful to the [E]lders' contribution to a current expression" (71).
7. *Introduce practice activities* as a way to get students participating when there is no further discussion about the expressions.
8. *Bring in rewards* for the participants' contributions, such as games, food or talking about future special events.

#### Develop a series of lessons

9. *Decide on topics or stories for future lessons*. This is done in conjunction with students and Elders. "Announce the topic for the next class session and tell students you are giving them something to think about between classes. Thinking of a topic can take some time. A topic needs to capture the interest of the people in the class, and it is more likely to do this if it concerns a central cultural issue" (72).

10. *Design instructional objectives* based on curriculum standards.
11. *Keep thinking of new ideas* based on what has been uncovered during the sessions and on the instructional objectives/curriculum standards.

### **Considerations in Resource Acquisition, Development and Use**

- Graham, Barbara. 2005. "The Development of Aboriginal Language Programs: A Journey towards Understanding." *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28.318–38.

Teacher and school district languages coordinator Barbara Graham writes about her experience in developing an Aboriginal language program in a suburban school district in a Canadian city. Her district hired four native speakers of Aboriginal languages—two Cree and two Ojibwe—who were not trained teachers to instruct Aboriginal language classes. In this situation, Graham notes that it was not sufficient simply to gather materials for instructors to use in Aboriginal language programs, or to have them develop materials themselves.

The school district invested in curricular and support materials by purchasing books, posters, recordings of music and stories, and by borrowing materials and resources from schools in districts with established programs in Aboriginal languages. Purchasing materials and making them accessible was only the first step in addressing the lack of curricular support for the language program. Teaching the instructors how to use the materials in ways that foster student language learning became part of my professional responsibilities.

Efforts to engage the language instructors in curriculum development proceeded very slowly during the first year of implementation. The instructors, without adequate preparation in instructional techniques or understanding of curriculum development and theories of language acquisition, found it difficult to design instructional activities and to manage and monitor student learning. Although we originally viewed the lack of curriculum materials as an organizational challenge, we soon discovered that the pedagogical implications of the lack of curricular materials were extremely difficult to address. (327)

Graham explained that her school district eventually remedied these problems with a combination of professional development programs for the instructors, and bringing in a qualified teacher who was also a native Cree speaker to work with the instructors in many areas.

- Marie Battiste, "Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society."

Battiste reminds readers that all cultural materials that are included in school programs must be reflective of actual Aboriginal culture, rather than based on the popular images of "Indians" seen in pop culture and still, unfortunately, in some educational materials. She observes that "[k]its and thematic units prepared by public education in some areas of Canada depict a prehistoric life of Aboriginal peoples, complete with teepees, skins, animal bones, rock tools, and arrowheads.

Aboriginal peoples are depicted as primitives, gone after the arrival of the early settlers or working their way toward assimilation in urban areas.... All First Nations and provincial schools require new teaching materials that depicts, accurately and adequately, the culture, history, heritage, worldviews, and philosophies of Aboriginal peoples” (2000a: 200).

## **B. Aboriginal Language Teacher Recruitment and Development**

Integral to the successful delivery of Aboriginal languages are considerations of Elders’ contributions to language learning and teacher/instructor development.

### **Recruiting Elders or Other Community Members to Teach**

One of the most discussed ways of incorporating community members into the classroom is through having Elders as teachers, either in a formal sense or in a supporting role in the classroom.

- Marie Battiste, “Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society.”

Battiste writes about the need to develop an education system that welcomes diversity of both background and perspective. Within this context, she is a strong believer in the need to include Elders in teaching roles in Aboriginal language education: “Elders are the critical link to Aboriginal epistemology [i.e., thought and worldview] through the Aboriginal languages” (2000a: 201). She adds that “[i]t seems obvious that [E]lders and others who can pass on Aboriginal identity, languages, and culture should be directly involved in the modern educational system” (2000a: 205).

When Elders are included in these systems, Battiste reminds her readers that “Elders in Aboriginal communities are the custodians of endangered [A]boriginal languages, and they must have dignity and an acknowledgement of the values of their services. Elders require the support of other [E]lders and flexibility in timing and scheduling. They should be provided with these necessary amenities” (2000a: 205).

- McCarty, Teresa L. and Schaffer, Rachel. 1992. “Language and Literacy Development.” *Teaching American Indian Students*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, 115–31. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.

In their discussion of promoting language and literacy education in Aboriginal languages, McCarty and Schaffer propose that members of the community can become involved in Aboriginal language education in many ways; e.g., serving as storytellers, providing information on “local history, geography, flora, fauna, institutions, and people” (123–24). All of these opportunities can enrich “the shared experiences of teachers, students, and community members, increasing the pool of knowledge to be tapped for future learning, and [build] the general climate of support for education” (123–24).

- Silverthorne, Joyce A. 1997. "Language Preservation and Human Resources Development." *Teaching Indigenous Languages*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, 105–15. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

Silverthorne, a teacher and former member of the Montana Board of Public Education, is interested in the personnel that would be needed to create a successful Aboriginal second language program. She notes that certain elements must be taken into consideration when recruiting Elders for teaching positions: "Not all fluent speakers want to teach language. It is difficult for anyone to go into a classroom and face 20 to 30 bright energetic students and teach them a language that few of them have heard" (106). However, she notes that for those speakers who would like to become teachers, there can be systems put into place to ease their entry into the classroom. For example, the Montana educational authorities created a renewable Specialist Certificate that allows fluent speakers of Aboriginal languages who are recommended by their tribes to become licensed for classroom teaching. The criteria for recommendation varies according to the health of the language: if a language is not widely spoken, a teacher need simply be a fluent speaker, while teachers of healthier languages may require a post-secondary degree.

- MacIvor, Madeleine. 1995. "Redefining Science Education for Aboriginal Students." *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, ed. by Marie Battiste, and Jean Barman, 73–98. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Métis educator Madeleine MacIvor explores the need for Aboriginal Canadians to acquire knowledge in the sciences, a need that is frequently overlooked by students and education systems. Elders can play a crucial role in rectifying this situation, as they can in Aboriginal language education. MacIvor observes that a crucial element is the establishment of respect and trust between the Elder and the school system: "Working with elders requires an understanding of protocol and the establishment and maintenance of relationships between [E]lder and apprentice" (86).

- Hinton, Leanne. 2003. "How to Teach when the Teacher Isn't Fluent." *Nurturing Native Languages*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, Octavia V. Trujillo, Roberto Luis Carrasco and Louise Lockard, 79–92. Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

Hinton notes that although they may be the only fluent speakers of a given Aboriginal language, not all Elders will want to (or be able to) teach a class full of energetic children; thus, the teachers may not be fluent speakers of the language. A way to mitigate this problem would be to not only have the Elders in the classroom as partners in language teaching, where possible, but to have the Elders become "language mentors" (79) for the non-fluent teachers. Hinton suggests that useful things for the mentors and the "teacher-learners" to discuss would be TPR-style commands ("stand up," "sit down," etc.); rituals (greetings, leave-takings, etc.); classroom management phrases ("raise your hand," "listen" and others); and "classroom patter" (89), or the informal, improvised elements of conversation (including discourse markers, such as English "okay," "so," and even "um").

## Possible Implementation Challenges Facing Language Teachers

The literature suggests that those who are considering becoming Aboriginal language teachers, as well as those who recruit teachers, be aware of the challenges that these teachers may face in the classroom.

- Verna J. Kirkness, “The Critical State of Aboriginal Languages in Canada.”

Kirkness examines the legal and moral foundations underlying the preservation of Aboriginal languages in Canada. Within this framework, she discusses numerous challenges that need to be overcome in current Aboriginal language education programs. She notes that when Elders are recruited as teachers, “[they] have either limited or no training in teaching methods or curriculum development, yet they are expected to prepare lesson plans, materials, maintain classroom decorum, often from kindergarten to Grade 12. It is obvious that the expectations are excessive and the effectiveness of language training in the schools is greatly diminished” (94).

- Stairs, Arlene. 1995. “Learning Processes and Teaching Roles in Native Education: Cultural Base and Cultural Brokerage.” *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, ed. by Marie Battiste, and Jean Barman, 139–53. Vancouver: UBC Press.

In her examination of two models of teaching in Baffin Island Inuit communities, Arlene Stairs of Queen’s University observes that at times, trained teachers are put into Aboriginal second language classrooms without being fluent in the language they are teaching. Even for Aboriginal language teachers who are both fluent speakers and have teacher certification, it is also all too common for them to have to spend a great deal of time on developing curriculum and materials, as these resources are generally in short supply. Because of this, she states that “Native teachers must be jacks of all educational trades” (147).

- Mary S. Linn, Tessie Naranjo, et al., “Awakening the Languages.”

In examining several Aboriginal language programs in the United States, Linn and her colleagues observed that teachers without sufficient assistance in developing curriculum and materials face more challenges than teachers who have support in these areas. “Under such pressure, it is difficult for them to remember to utilize their speaking ability in a classroom setting in order to maximize their fluency. They face the challenge of creating a classroom that optimally approximates a natural language setting and that promotes communicative interactions between the teacher and students and between students and students. They face a challenge to do things in the language” (116).

## Teacher Development Programs

Writers and researchers agree that an important element of teacher development must be instilling confidence and pride in new teachers' abilities and roles. One way to develop this confidence is to assure Aboriginal language teachers that they are not alone in their efforts by including them in a community of professionals as early as possible in their careers.

- Paupanekis, Kenneth and Westfall, David. 2001. "Teaching Native Language Programs: Survival Strategies." *Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Study in Decolonization*, ed. by K. P. Binda, and Sharilyn Calliou, 89–104. Mississauga, ON: Canadian Educators' Press.

Within their proposed conditions for successful Aboriginal language programs, Paupanekis and Westfall outline the importance of having proper teacher education. This will not only benefit the teachers, but also students: "When proper training is provided, Native language instruction will reinforce not only the concepts that are being taught in school, but also the learner's English language development" (98). They add that teachers are a crucial resource in Aboriginal language teaching: "...the experience of professional linguists who have seen many programs fail in spite of adequate materials has convinced them that even more important than books and other material resources are Native language teachers who are educated in effective *language teaching methods*" (90; italics original). Finally, they remind their readers that "[n]ative language teachers, like all professionals, need to have colleagues and mentors with whom they can interact. Limited interaction with others may create a sense of isolation, if not alienation, from the rest of the teaching staff. Native language teachers need to feel part of a team which is the entire staff..." (95).

- Norbert Francis and Jon Reyhner, *Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education*.

At the very beginning of their detailed examination of the potential for Aboriginal language education, Francis and Reyhner state that "there is no substitute for the professionally trained language teacher, and the systematic and well designed language learning program that he or she implements in the formal setting of the classroom" (5–6).

- Johns, Alana and Mazurkewich, Irene. 2001. "The Role of the University in the Training of Native Language Teachers." *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, ed. by Leanne Hinton, and Ken Hale, 355–66. San Diego: Academic Press.

Alana Johns and Irene Mazurkewich, Canadian linguists who have been involved in the training of Aboriginal language teachers (in particular, Innu and Inuttut speakers) in Labrador, write in their report on the role of universities in Aboriginal language teacher education that "[t]eachers who speak a native language must be afforded special recognition and respect for this knowledge and provided with the linguistic and pedagogical training to teach the language" (358). Further, they recommend a cohort model for Aboriginal language teacher training—that is, that teachers are trained as a group rather than as individuals within a large program:

[I]ndividuals who are in language professions should receive training that allows them to develop a common expertise. The rationale behind this approach is that the number of Inuttut-speaking teachers in the program is small, their ability to devote time away from their families is limited, and neither the community nor the school system fully appreciates that schoolteachers with little training and few materials cannot maintain the language on their own... In addition, one cannot assume that each individual will continue as a native language teacher. Thus, for a wide variety of personal reasons (career changes, etc.), it is important that a healthy number of speakers be trained as language teachers. (359)

Having a group of colleagues will allow teachers, “as language professionals, [to] feel confident discussing aspects of grammar and dialect differences both among themselves and with students and the inevitable outsiders who ask them questions about their language” (359). Within this cohort approach, however, they also suggest that separate streams of training will be required for teacher trainees who are fluent speakers of their Aboriginal language and for those who are still learning the language: “It was clear that those [in the Inuttut teaching program] who were speakers of the language could best use a course which gives the student the confidence and knowledge to talk about and investigate their own language, that is, the skills of the language professional. At the same time, the nonspeakers needed to learn to speak the language. The two goals could not be accomplished in the same classroom” (357–58).

- Mary S. Linn, Tessie Naranjo, et al., “Awakening the Languages.”

In their examination of diverse Aboriginal language teaching programs, Linn and her colleagues acknowledge the importance of teachers having confidence in their linguistic skills and realizing the worth of what they do. “Teachers must realize that they are the carriers of linguistic and cultural knowledge. They must strengthen their knowledge and experience of their [Indigenous] language and culture—they cannot afford to feel ‘inadequate and incompetent,’ especially when they compare themselves with other ‘non-Native’ teachers. This also addresses the disparity that exists between those who are certified through teacher education programs and those who are not. Essentially, a ‘reverse brainwashing’ of such teachers must occur ... through which language teachers can begin to legitimize their language and culture, validate their teaching, and incorporate community values into the schooling of children” (116).

- Kirkness, Verna J. 1998b. *Aboriginal Languages: A Collection of Talks and Papers*. Vancouver: Self-Published.

Kirkness began her career as a classroom teacher in Manitoba, and later became an advisor to provincial education systems and other levels of government. In a presentation to the Languages and Ideas Workshop at the University of Saskatchewan in 1981, she outlined a possible training program for Aboriginal language teachers.

1. There must be courses in linguistics....

2. Indigenous language teachers should learn how to record a language using field notes, tape recorders, video-tapes, card files, photos and collections. In addition they need to know how to plan, what to ask, how to analyze and process what they have gathered, and how to analyze stories.
3. Indigenous language teachers need to learn how to best utilize the materials they have gathered, the teaching aids available to them, how to best use field trips, cultural demonstrations and how to develop lessons using a variety of teaching aids.
4. Indigenous language teachers should learn language history; how languages are related, how they change and evolve, how they die, the development of dialects, borrowings and so forth.
5. Indigenous language teachers should study the social aspects of the language, i.e. language revival and maintenance, how to encourage language pride, how to encourage language study, how to encourage language use (opportunities for language use), and both short-range and long-range language planning.
6. Indigenous language teachers should learn a variety of instructional techniques.
7. Indigenous language teachers should learn how to plan and develop lessons and teaching materials for different groups ranging from primary students through to adult classes, as well as students of mixed fluencies.
8. Indigenous language teachers in training should be involved in practica: first watching an experienced teacher, preparing and delivering lessons, then assisting an experienced teacher, doing their own preparation, teaching for short periods and finally taking on the whole task.
9. Indigenous language teachers should learn how to work with administrators, teachers, parents, and funding agencies, as well as learning how to deal with government officials, school boards, [I]ndigenous band councils, and governmental [I]ndigenous agencies. Teachers should learn, in addition, to become effective in garnering parental and family support.

(1998b: 68–9)

### **Summer Language Institutes**

One method of providing either pre-service training or in-service training for Aboriginal language teachers could be through Aboriginal language summer institutes: the American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI), which has been held annually at the University of Arizona for 28 years, and the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI), an eight-year-old program modelled on AILDI and held at the University of Alberta. The instructors at these institutes are educators, researchers and Aboriginal language speakers drawn from the teaching and administrative staff of school districts and from university faculties across North America; many of the authors referred to in this survey have taught at either AILDI or CILLDI.



**AILDI** ([www.u.arizona.edu/~aildi/](http://www.u.arizona.edu/~aildi/))

Teresa McCarty of the University of Arizona and her colleagues presented a report to the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages conference in 1997 on the first 19 of the AILDI programs. They summarize the main goal of the program as follows: “to incorporate linguistic and cultural knowledge into curriculum in ways that democratize schooling for [I]ndigenous students and support the retention of their languages and cultures” (McCarty et al., 1997: 88). The researchers, all of whom have taught at AILDI, further note that “AILDI has been an integral force in the credentialing and endorsement of native-speaking teachers, many of whom have assumed administrative and other leadership positions within their local schools” (1997: 94). In terms of the credentialing of Aboriginal teachers, “Over the course of three or four summers, a B.Ed. or an M.Ed. can be earned through AILDI since it is affiliated with the Faculty of Education at the University of Arizona and deliberately offers courses which can lead directly to a degree” (Rice et al., 2004: 1).

An additional benefit of these language institutes that these authors note is the materials development that takes place during the programs. “‘Writing in my own language to create lessons for classroom use’ is a typical participant response to questions about the most useful aspects of their AILDI experience. The numerous materials developed in Hualapai, Havasupai, Tohono O’odham, Akimel O’odham, Western Apache, and Navajo are but a few examples of the ways in which institute coursework has been transformed into locally relevant curricula...” (1997: 94).

Lucille Watahomigie, a Hualapai educator, and linguist Akira Yamamoto of the University of Kansas, have both taught at AILDI. In a 1992 article in *Language*, they described some of the philosophy behind the AILDI programs: “The AILDI has held a basic view of language and culture teaching. Language is not taught by mere word lists and grammatical drills. And native literature is not fully appreciated by pupils if it is presented in translation. Language and literature can be taught most effectively by teachers who are native speakers of the language and are trained to teach in elementary and secondary schools with language materials and literature produced by native speakers” (1992: 12). This philosophy appears to be in line with that which appears in many of the writings examined here.

**CILLDI** ([www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/elementaryed/CILLDI.cfm](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/elementaryed/CILLDI.cfm))

Sally Rice, Heather Blair and Donna Paskemin, the driving forces behind CILLDI at the University of Alberta, prepared an overview of CILLDI’s programs and successes in 2004. They describe the program’s goal as “to provide opportunities for those interested in the preservation and revitalization of [I]ndigenous languages to extend their professional growth as they take on the challenge of saving their languages” (1).

The courses offered are credit courses in the University of Alberta’s Elementary and/or Secondary Education programs, the Linguistics program, and the Native Studies program. In 2007, the program moved from one three-week session, in which students would take two courses, to two blocks of 7.5 days, with students taking one intensive course in each block. The 2007 course offerings included:

- Introduction to Language and Literacy Development
- Sustaining Language and Culture through Traditional Knowledge and Practices
- Literacy and Drama in Aboriginal Language Education
- Introduction to Linguistic Analysis for Indigenous Language Revitalization
- Comparative Athapaskan II: Sentence and Narrative Patterning
- Cree Immersion for Adult Beginners
- Second Language Acquisition: Teaching Indigenous Languages and Literacy in an Immersion Context
- Linguistic Diversity and Biodiversity
- Practical Phonetics
- The Structure of Cree through Immersion
- Technologies for Endangered Language Documentation and Teacher Resource Development

Previous course offerings included Globalization and Indigenous Language Loss, Introduction to Blackfoot, Comparative Athapaskan, and Comparative Algonquin.

### **Incorporating Linguistics Training in Teacher Development Programs**

Verna Kirkness’s recommendation that Aboriginal language teachers receive training in linguistics was noted earlier. One reason for this is that there are a tremendous number of speech sounds available to humans to use; some researchers have suggested that there are as many as 600 consonant sounds and 200 vowel sounds found in the different languages of the world (see O’Grady and Archibald, 2004: 12). Because any language can choose from any of these sounds, and can combine them in almost any number of ways, it is often the case that learners of a second language will encounter sounds or clusters of sounds that their first language does not use. However, this problem can be eased somewhat if students are made aware of the differences between their first language and the language they are learning. In order for this to occur, teachers must receive some training in basic linguistic theory, either pre-service or in-service, including:

- phonetics – the articulation and perception of speech sounds
- phonology – the patterning of speech sounds
- morphology – word formation
- syntax – sentence formation

(adapted from O’Grady and Archibald, 2004: 5)

- Carpenter, Veronica. 1997. “Teaching Children To ‘Unlearn’ the Sounds of English.” *Teaching Indigenous Languages*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, 31–39. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

Veronica Carpenter, a language teacher and graduate student at the University of Southern Maine, uses her work on children’s phonetic knowledge to illustrate the difficulties that students

learning an Aboriginal language may encounter if that language has different phonetic rules than their first language; students could then become frustrated if they find they do not sound like the teacher or like native speakers they may have heard.

For example, children know that /m/ does not start a consonant cluster at the beginning of a word in the English language. You cannot use an /m/ with an /l/ or a /g/ or a /k/. Children know this English phonological rule. However, in the Western Abenaki dialect (part of the Algonquian language family) you can start a word with a consonant cluster that starts with an /m/. A word can begin with an 'mk' and that is unfamiliar to the English language. In learning Abenaki as a second language, children would pronounce this consonant cluster as 'muk' (this is known as schwa insertion) as English rules of phonology would predict, but the Abenaki word in its original form would be pronounced 'mmmkk' (mmm as in 'MMM, that's good!' with a /k/ sound on the end. Because this is an unfamiliar consonant cluster for a native English speaker, the rules of phonology from the English language would alter the Abenaki word from its original form. Thus, [I]ndigenous language word pronunciation is altered and influenced by the way children first learned to pronounce the sounds of the English language. (37–8)

However, if a teacher has received some linguistics training, he or she could teach a child what is known implicitly in English, then help focus explicitly on the structures that bring meaning to the language they are learning (37).

- Kenneth Paupanekis and David Westfall, "Teaching Native Language Programs."

In outlining the conditions that should be met in successful Aboriginal language education programs, Paupanekis and Westfall suggest that "[a] person who has had formal training in the morphology of another language, and who returns to the first language and applies some of the principles will always find the task of teaching a Native language much easier and more rewarding" (92).

- Teresa L. McCarty and Rachel Schaffer, "Language and Literacy Development."

McCarty and Schaffer, looking at language and literacy development in Aboriginal contexts, support training pre-service or in-service teachers in the theoretical linguistic disciplines: "Regardless of the teacher's language background, linguistic study of English and of the [I]ndigenous languages represented in the classroom is immensely valuable, providing a great deal of information about the languages and their phonemic, grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic structures, as well as knowledge of how languages in general can be described and analyzed. This develops a sense of language as an integrated, rule-governed system..." (124).

## Teacher Development in the Affective Domain

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom developed the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, in which he categorizes the educational goals/objectives into three separate “domains”: the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Overall, Bloom’s taxonomy promotes a holistic and balanced approach to education. Alberta Education has recognized the importance of Bloom’s taxonomy in enhancing student learning and teacher development.

Literature in this section pertains to the affective domain as it relates to teachers. In the document *Focus on Inquiry: A Teacher’s Guide to Implementing Inquiry-based Learning*, the affective domain is described as involving “elements of pleasure, engagement, motivation, imagination, participation in community and acknowledgement of other activities ... The affective domain involves negative feelings as well as positive feelings. The process of learning something new, especially when that new learning challenges old understandings, is often accompanied by feelings of confusion, frustration and sometimes anger” (Alberta Learning, 2004: 76). In the document *Signs of Learning in the Affective Domain*, the affective domain was defined as “the attitudes, feelings, emotions and predispositions. Attitudes are of paramount importance to learning and they predispose us to behave in certain ways. Attitudes and values become evident in behaviour” (Lambert and Himsl, 1993: 11).

In teaching Aboriginal language, educators need to be aware of the attitudes, predispositions and “feelings” that they may overtly or covertly “bring” to the classroom, especially since a significant amount of communication occurs nonverbally. The affective domain makes important connections between attitude and learning and the idea that the tone of the language instruction may influence students’ desire to learn.

- Norbert Francis and Jon Reyhner, *Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education*.

In a section entitled “Constraints and Opportunities, Situational Factors and Universals,” Francis and Reyhner discuss purported differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal thinking and offer a caution for educators and program planners: “...teachers should approach with a healthy measure of skepticism sweeping claims about: global-holistic learning styles, non-analytical thought, field-dependency, fatalistic world views, and fundamental differences (in contrast to ‘Western norms’) in perception and cognition” (70).

- Robert M. Leavitt, “Language and Cultural Content in Native Education.”

Leavitt urges educators to remember that the cultural elements they incorporate into an Aboriginal language program are part of a living, growing culture, not museum pieces or antiquated ideas. Further, these elements should explore the essence of the culture—worldview, interpersonal interaction, etc.—which may be quite different from that of the majority (English) culture to which students are primarily exposed.

Even where curriculum pays heed to social, cognitive, and linguistic culture, it is almost always from a material point of view. Spiritual beliefs and legends, for instance, are treated as artifacts, and these, together with descriptions of kinship patterns, transportation and hunting techniques, and the names of languages, tools, and food plants, make up a static set of data about Indian and Inuit peoples. With few exceptions, the educational principles and practices of Native cultures are not applied in the classroom, even for Native students (127).

- John W. and Virginia Lyons Friesen, *Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Plea for Integration*.

While John and Virginia Friesen believe that Aboriginal knowledge must be incorporated into Canadian society and education as a whole in order for those cultural systems to thrive and prosper in the coming years, they remind their readers that there is no universal “Aboriginal culture” that can be incorporated into all language programs. Differences between communities, bands and nations must be taken into account. As Friesen and Friesen note, “Indian bands generally vary somewhat in belief and practice even if they are part of the same culture area. Not all plains tribes believe or practice their culture in the same manner. This is particularly true for West Coast Indigenous cultures, Plateau Indians, northern First Nations, or Woodland peoples. Even local Aboriginal communities or bands, who may be members of a larger First Nations cultural configuration, may differ slightly in their lifestyle from their tribal counterparts. Teachers working in these respective areas will need to keep their ears tuned to what is acceptable in each community” (34).

- Littlebear, Dick. 1992a. “Getting Teachers and Parents to Work Together.” *Teaching American Indian Students*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, 104–11. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.

Littlebear, as part of a larger examination of the effectiveness of the total physical response method in teaching Aboriginal languages, gives an example of the need for awareness of the differences between Aboriginal cultures: “For instance in all Plains Indians cultures, eagle feathers are sacred. Yet among the Cheyennes, eagle feathers must not be touched by Cheyenne females. So, something that may seem logical to a teacher, like awarding an eagle feather or a likeness of one to a Cheyenne female for an athletic or academic accomplishment, would violate Cheyenne beliefs. Yet, doing so in a classroom with students from another Plains Indian tribe might be perfectly acceptable” (1992a: 107).

- Arlene Stairs, “Learning Processes and Teaching Roles in Native Education.”

Stairs compares two models of teaching in Inuit communities on Baffin Island. One is based on traditional values, culture and methods of socialization and teaching. The other is informed by “mainstream” educational methods. Stairs suggests that the ways of teaching, including the ways of teaching language, will be noticeably different between the two styles of program: “...teachers

in a culture-based program have as their first priority to establish processes of learning and teaching which connect with the patterns of adult-child and child-child relationship expected by the students and the community. It is significant for the validity of this culturally based approach to educator roles that in many Native traditions teachers are considered an integral part of the knowledge they possess, and their ways of teaching are as important as the knowledge itself” (146).

### 3. Family and Community Involvement in the Language Learning Process

#### Advisory Bodies and Language Teams

As many educators have discovered, beginning an Aboriginal language teaching program can present many challenges, including the appropriate incorporation of cultural elements and the lack of teaching materials available for the languages. To assist in creating and maintaining Aboriginal language programs, many communities and school systems have created advisory bodies to help address these ongoing concerns. Advisory bodies are found in education and revitalization programs for many Aboriginal languages, both in North America and internationally. As well, researchers suggest that advisory bodies that are not directly related to language education, such as the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative's work on science curriculum, could also be useful models for language programs. The authors examined here explore numerous ways in which such an advisory body—or a series of these bodies—could be used:

- creating instructional materials (writing materials, telling stories to be recorded, etc.)
  - ensuring accuracy and appropriateness of materials (e.g., which oral narratives are suitable for classroom use; whether a lexical or grammatical Web site lists words and phrases correctly)
  - helping to standardize orthography
  - deciding on new words to use in curriculum and materials
  - providing perspective or “sober second thought” in the development and maintenance of the program.
- Mary S. Linn, Tessie Naranjo, et al., “Awakening the Languages.”

In their survey of 15 Native language programs in three American states, Linn and her colleagues frequently observed the key role that advisory bodies play in the successful running of the programs, regardless of the differences between the programs. They describe a typical advisory body, or “Language Team,” in this way:

A Language Team consists of Elders, community language teachers and advocates, and outside resource people, such as linguists and curriculum developers. It is important to stress that the linguists and education specialists are only advisors and perhaps promoters of new teaching methods ... they do not run the show. Successful teams rely on the Elders in all final decision making. They are democratic among the community educators and language advocates. The outside resource people give guidance and, especially, training in language material collection and analysis and in curriculum and materials development. The result is materials that are accurate, consistent, culturally appropriate, and the community's own products. (117)

They also suggest the inclusion of both older and younger people in these advisory bodies. “Balance and harmony are good in everything, but here we are specifically referring to the balance between old and new, between tradition and innovation. For example, successful programs will rely on their Elders for decisions and council, but the younger people need to have a voice in introducing new ideas” (119).

- Patterson, Francene. 2002. “Methods of Madness: The Tuscarora Language Committee.” *Indigenous Languages Across the Community*, ed. by Barbara Burnaby, and Jon Reyhner, 85–88. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.
- Vivian Ayoungman, “Native Language Renewal.”

Several nations have established language committees, including the Tuscarora of western New York State (Patterson, 2002) and the Siksika nation in Alberta. The Siksika committee eventually evolved into a curriculum committee operating within the Board of Education (Ayoungman, 1995: 186).

- Jacobs, Kaia’titahkhe Annette. 1998. “A Chronology of Mohawk Language Instruction at Kahnawà:ke.” *Endangered Languages: Current Issues and Future Prospects*, ed. by Lenore A. Grenoble, and Lindsay J. Whaley, 117–23. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaia’titahkhe Annette Jacobs outlines the development of the Mohawk language programs on the Kahnawà:ke reserve in Quebec beginning in the 1970s. These programs were proposed by parents and a school principal, spearheaded by a group of three community members, augmented by members of the community who undertook teacher training and eventually aided by linguists from outside of the community. In particular, a standard Mohawk orthography to be used in the schools was developed by the committee of teachers, aided by a linguist (Marianne Mithun), in 1973. The Mohawk schools on the Kahnawà:ke reserve in Quebec established a permanent curriculum office in 1983 to build on the work that had been done on a part-time basis before that time by graduate students, teachers in the community, linguists and others with the aid of federal government grants.

- Hinton, Leanne. 2001a. “Language Revitalization: An Overview.” *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, ed. by Leanne Hinton, and Ken Hale, 3–18. San Diego: Academic Press.

As part of the extensive overview that is *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, Hinton notes that “the Hawaiian immersion schools have a Lexicon Committee that determines new words, which are needed in large numbers as advanced school curricula are developed. They put out a *Dictionary of New Words* in a new edition each year that is sent out to all the classrooms and used religiously by the teachers” (2001a: 15).



- Lipka, Jerry and Ilutsik, Esther. 1995. “Negotiated Change: Yup’ik Perspectives on Indigenous Schooling” [Win 1201]. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 19.195–207.

Alaskan researchers and educators Jerry Lipka and Esther Ilutsik contributed a Yup’ik perspective to the discussion of Indigenous language and literacy education in the 1995 special issue of the *Bilingual Research Journal*. The Yup’ik of Alaska undertook a project called *Ciulistet* (Leaders) in the 1980s and 1990s, which “fundamentally” (198) incorporated Elders’ knowledge into teaching methods and materials development, and also served as a study and research group for teachers. The members of the *Ciulistet* would demonstrate elements of Yup’ik life, such as using the Yup’ik base 20 numeracy system (taught with the aid of the drum), “how to observe the sky to predict weather, how to navigate on land and sea without instrumentation, how to observe natural directional indicators, how to weave grass baskets, and how to tailor by visually ‘measuring’ a person for a *kuspuk* (women’s parka)” (198). Lipka and Ilutsik indicate that, at its core, “the work of the *Ciulistet* concerns itself not only with collecting, recording, and learning the [E]lders’ knowledge, but with interpreting that knowledge so that it is accessible to students and fitted in to the culture of the school” (199).

- Corson, David. 1996. “Official Language Minority and Aboriginal First-Language Education: Implications of Norway’s Sámi Language Act for Canada.” *Canadian Journal of Education*, 21.84–104.

David Corson, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, uses the extensive incorporation of Sámi language and culture into the Norwegian education system as a potential model for Canadian education. The Sámi (formerly known as Laplanders) have created a Sámi Education Council, which has several roles, including advising the Ministry of Education, producing textbooks (including teachers’ resources and student workbooks) in Sámi for all grade levels and in all subjects, advising parents on “language maintenance matters, including inquiries about motivating children to maintain the language,” and engaging in “corpus language planning to augment and intellectualize the Sámi vocabularies, so that education can be carried on in those languages at increasingly more senior levels” (92–93).

- Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and Alaska Native Knowledge Network. 2004. “Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools and the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative.” *The Challenge of Indigenous Education: Practice and Perspectives*, ed. by Linda King, and Sabine Schielmann, 243–62. Paris: UNESCO.

The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI) is designed to bridge the gap between traditional Aboriginal knowledge and the mainstream education system. The initiative is a collaboration between a number of groups, including the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN) housed at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. As part of the initiative, an “Academy of Elders” was created to help prepare their science curriculum based on Aboriginal knowledge (251). This group consists of native teachers, Elders and practicing scientists/science teachers, who come together for the Elders and professionals to pass on their knowledge to teachers. The teachers then develop classroom application for this knowledge,

ensure its accuracy with Elders and professionals, and pilot test it in the classroom for effectiveness with students. The finished units are compiled and distributed to other teachers, as well as being posted on the Internet. Such a process could be used not only in the content-based language programs that teach subjects such as science in the Aboriginal language, but also in language and culture programs.

- Kenneth Paupanekis and David Westfall, “Teaching Native Language Programs.”

Paupanekis and Westfall suggest that “teachers who make their own discoveries and come up with their own effective ideas should be acknowledged and encouraged to share with other instructors” (94). This could be another function performed by an advisory body.

- Blair, Heather, Rice, Sally, Wood, Valerie and Janvier, John. 2002. “Daghida: Cold Lake First Nation Works towards Dene Language Revitalization.” *Indigenous Languages Across the Community*, ed. by Barbara Burnaby, and Jon Reyhner, 89–98. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

The Daghida project in the Cold Lake First Nation was a joint effort between the community (speakers of the Dene Suline language) and researchers and educators at the University of Alberta. Heather Blair and her colleagues reported in 2002 that the partnership consisted of three major components: “(a) sociolinguistic, linguistic, and psycholinguistic research; (b) language retention and language education efforts; and (c) cultural preservation and revival” (91). One element that spanned the three major areas of research and development was “an entire lexicalization component. Its objective would be the coining and adoption of new Dene terms for novel or introduced concepts. Creating new terms in the language is critical if the language is to be relevant to modern society, and it is essential if primary and secondary educational materials are to be developed in the Dene language and used in bilingual classes. But in order for any ‘invented’ lexicalizations to stand a chance of acceptance, we need to determine the dominant lexicalization patterns in the language so that any coined terms will seem congruent with existing ones and thus be more likely to be adopted by today’s speakers” (92).

## **Parental Involvement in Aboriginal Language Learning**

Community members and researchers alike stress the importance of having the community at large, and parents in particular, involved in Aboriginal language programs. Parents support their children’s communication efforts in the Aboriginal language by speaking with them at home; this may mean that language learning/support programs should be made available for the parents and other family members.

- 2001. “Proceedings: Aboriginal Languages Symposium.” Edmonton, Alberta: Alberta Learning.

On September 29 and 30, 2001, the Curriculum Branch of Alberta Learning hosted a symposium on Aboriginal languages at the Chateau Louis Conference Centre in Edmonton. Participants were drawn from across the province and the different Aboriginal communities, and included educators and administrators from the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary systems; parents; business and community leaders; and Aboriginal Elders. As part of the symposium, a panel discussion entitled “Perspectives on Aboriginal Language Education in Alberta” was held, and raised four key issues. The fourth issue addressed parental involvement in Aboriginal language programs: “Parental commitment plays a major role in the success or failure of Aboriginal languages education. Parents can participate in ‘intergenerational’ learning of the language. Parents need support for their efforts to teach their own children” (9).

- Cantoni, Gina P. 1997. “Keeping Minority Languages Alive: The School’s Responsibility.” *Teaching Indigenous Languages*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, 1–9. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.

Cantoni notes that schools will need to provide information and support to parents who may have had negative experiences with their mother tongue in the past.

American schools are not alone in having contributed to the decline of home languages. Remembering the frustration they had suffered in school because they could not understand the teacher’s language, parents all over the world have tried to protect their children from a similar ordeal. Instead of teaching them the language of their home, they made the effort and sacrifice of using only the language of the school. The Native families who decided to speak only English around their children in hopes of facilitating their academic progress have succeeded, in most instances, in raising a generation of monolingual speakers of English. They have, unknowingly and unintentionally, deprived their children of the cognitive advantages of bilingualism. Moreover, they have become unable to transmit cultural knowledge that has no equivalent in the world-view and language of outsiders. The children of these families have been deprived of their rightful linguistic and cultural heritage.

The many parents who made this kind of decision had their children’s well-being at heart and are not to blame for the societal attitudes of their time. These parents are now turning to the schools for help and leadership in keeping home languages alive. A school-wide initiative in support of Native language maintenance must include the following components: dissemination of information, attitudinal change, and sustained action. (1–2)

- Heather Blair, Sally Rice, et al., “Daghida: Cold Lake First Nation Works towards Dene Language Revitalization.”

The participants in the Daghida project in the Cold Lake First Nation, in the language retention and education aspects of their work, noted that many of the young parents whose children would be of the age to be in Dene Suline programs cannot speak, read or write the language themselves. They report that “[b]ecause, as parents, this generation is essential to language transmission (and thus revitalization), we felt the need to work with them from the outset. In response to this need, we established weekly adult language classes. These classes are offered at various times throughout the week to ensure that there is sufficient opportunity for everyone interested to attend. The primary goal of these classes is to promote oral Dene language use. Efforts are therefore aimed at teaching participants useful conversation skills and at creating an environment that encourages and supports Dene language use” (94).

The Daghida project researchers also suggest that more informal means can be used to encourage conversation among parents: “Another forum for adult language and literacy development is the Dene Language Café, where any interested community members can come to share a meal and converse in Dene. This is a weekly informal event that fosters recognition of the importance of the language for everyday use” (94).

- Mary S. Linn, Tessie Naranjo, et al., “Awakening the Languages.”

Linn and her colleagues noted that a characteristic of the successful Aboriginal language programs they explored was “[b]eing family oriented. In a natural setting, children acquire language at home from their primary caregivers. In growing up with their family, children learn what is important from the family. Thus, it is more and more apparent that just teaching children the language does not work if they cannot go home and use the language with their parents or grandparents. Just teaching young adults does not work if they do not see their parents wanting to use the language. Teaching adults does not work if they have no one to talk to in the language. However, teaching to a family overcomes many of these obstacles. Classes and camps that encourage parent and extended family involvement with children see more progress in the children’s and the adults’ abilities to actually use the language” (118).

## Conclusion

In the development of this literature review, the following themes and issues were identified and explored:

- The inextricable interconnectedness of language and culture was recognized, and is evident throughout this document.
- Generally, the authors cited promoted an “immersion-style” approach to language teaching, whether the instruction time is one period per day, half a day or all day. They take this to mean focusing on natural communication—through such means as communication-based language teaching, experiential learning and using traditional oral narratives—rather than on rote memorization of lists of nouns.
- Pre-service and in-service teacher development, both for fluent speakers of the languages being taught and for teachers who are not yet fluent, will be essential in ensuring both the teachers’ success and the success of the programs.
- Aboriginal community members—including Elders and parents of children in the programs—should be included in the development, execution and maintenance of Aboriginal Language as a Second Language programs.

An area that was not discussed in detail in this report, but which will need to be taken into consideration as the Aboriginal Language as a Second Language programs are developed, is the issue of disseminating community-developed instructional materials. It was recognized that a significant amount of Aboriginal language materials have been developed by First Nations organizations and communities and that these materials are not publicized and therefore not accessible for this particular literature search. Intellectual property and rights would need to be addressed and agreements made to obtain information and materials from First Nation communities. Further investigation of Indigenous intellectual and property rights and issues can be found at [http://www.unesco.org/culture/copyright/folklore/html\\_eng/declaration.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/culture/copyright/folklore/html_eng/declaration.shtml).

Aboriginal language research is steadily increasing. The findings of future researchers will significantly contribute to the theory and the understanding of effective pedagogical practices.

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## Appendix: List of Currently Available Resources

The following is a list of Aboriginal language resources that may be of use to teachers, students, administrators, curriculum developers and members of teacher development programs. It is not an exhaustive list, but should provide initial points of contact with a variety of organizations and programs. This information was retrieved in March, 2007.

### Canadian Aboriginal Book Publishers and Distributors

#### Core Learning Resources

7554 Haszard Street

Burnaby, BC

V5E 3X1

[www.corelearningresources.com](http://www.corelearningresources.com)

A distributor of many Aboriginally oriented children's titles (in English).

#### Duval House Publishing

18228 – 102 Avenue

Edmonton, AB

T5S 1S7

[www.duvalhouse.com](http://www.duvalhouse.com)

Publisher of children's books and textbooks in Cree and Blackfoot. Resources approved by Alberta Education.

#### Kegedonce Press

Cape Croker Reserve

RR#5

Wiaraton, ON

N0H 2T0

[www.kegedonce.com](http://www.kegedonce.com)

Publications by Aboriginal authors (fiction, poetry, anthologies; mostly in English) not necessarily aimed at children, but might be good for high school students.

#### Pemmican Publications Inc.

150 Henry Ave.

Winnipeg, MB

R3B 0J7

[www.pemmican.mb.ca](http://www.pemmican.mb.ca)

A Métis publisher with variety of publications (including children's books) in Michif, Cree and English.

Penumbra Press  
PO Box 940  
Manotick, ON  
K4M 1A8

[www.penumbrapress.com](http://www.penumbrapress.com)

A variety of Aboriginally oriented publications, including children's books, in English.

Theytus Books  
Green Mountain Rd., Lot 45  
RR#2, Site 50, Comp. 8  
Penticton, BC  
V2A 6J7

[www.theytusbooks.ca](http://www.theytusbooks.ca)

A variety of Aboriginally themed publications, including children's books, mostly in English.

#### Resources about Aboriginal authors and writings

Canadian Literature for Young People: Aboriginal

[www.informationgoddess.ca/CanadianLiteratureForYoungPeople/aboriginal.htm](http://www.informationgoddess.ca/CanadianLiteratureForYoungPeople/aboriginal.htm)

First Nations Periodical Index

[www.lights.ca/sifc/journals.htm](http://www.lights.ca/sifc/journals.htm)

Links to Aboriginal Canadian Authors and Illustrators

[www.learningwithliterature.ualberta.ca/aboriginal.htm](http://www.learningwithliterature.ualberta.ca/aboriginal.htm)

Our Story Aboriginal Writing Challenge

[www.our-story.ca/youthWriting.html](http://www.our-story.ca/youthWriting.html)

For youth aged 14–18 and 19–29; sponsored by The Dominion Institute and Theytus Books.

#### Language and Culture Resources

Aboriginal Multi-Media Society

13245 – 146 Street

Edmonton, AB

T5L 4S8

[www.ammsa.com](http://www.ammsa.com)

Publishes the national *Windspeaker* newspaper (which has a “Classroom Edition”) and several regional newspapers; runs the CFWE radio station.

Blackfoot Resources page of Dr. Donald Frantz (University of Lethbridge)  
<http://people.uleth.ca/~frantz/blkft.html>

Blackfoot Resources page of Linguistics Department, University of Calgary  
[www.fp.ucalgary.ca/blackfoot/](http://www.fp.ucalgary.ca/blackfoot/)

Blackfoot Syllabary  
[www.omniglot.com/writing/blackfoot.htm](http://www.omniglot.com/writing/blackfoot.htm)

Dene Community Portal  
<http://www.firstvoices.com/scripts/WebObjects.exe/FirstVoices.woa/wa/enterLanguageArchive?archive=ff0d1c802630b006>

Dene Fonts  
<http://members.tripod.com/%7EDeneFont/>  
<http://denefont.tripod.com/tech.htm>

Elderspeak (Dene and Cree)  
[www.horizonzero.ca/elderspeak/](http://www.horizonzero.ca/elderspeak/)

Four Directions Teachings  
[www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/index.html](http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/index.html)  
Cultural teachings from five First Nations, including Blackfoot and Cree.

Glenbow Museum  
130-9 Avenue S.E.  
Calgary, AB  
T2G 0P3  
[www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/](http://www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/)  
Extensive Web resources on Blackfoot, “Niitsitapiisini: Our Way of Life,” including materials (Web pages, stories) written/told in Blackfoot.

Indian and Northern Affairs (Government of Canada) Kids’ Stop  
[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks)  
Has audio samples of Siksika (Blackfoot) and Michif phrases, as well as numerous other resources.

The Gift of Language and Culture Web site (Cree)  
[www.giftoflanguageandculture.ca/index.html](http://www.giftoflanguageandculture.ca/index.html)

Languagegeek.com: Native Languages Home Page  
[www.languagegeek.com](http://www.languagegeek.com)  
Includes most of Alberta’s Aboriginal languages.

Louis Riel Institute: Michif Language Audio Lessons  
[www.louisrielinstitute.com/education/michiflanguage.php](http://www.louisrielinstitute.com/education/michiflanguage.php)

Michif and Métis Cultural Site  
[www.saskschools.ca/curr\\_content/creelang/language/index.html](http://www.saskschools.ca/curr_content/creelang/language/index.html)  
<http://michif.dev.kcdc.ca/language/>

Michif CD Texts  
<http://metis.kisikew.org/language/michifCDTexts/index.shtml>

Native American Language Net  
[www.native-languages.org](http://www.native-languages.org)

Nisto.com Cree Language  
[www.nisto.com/cree/](http://www.nisto.com/cree/)

Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre  
120 – 33rd Street East  
Saskatoon, SK  
S7K 0S2

Educational resource development, production and distribution for Cree (Woodlands, Plains, Swampy), Salteaux, Dene, Dakota, Nakota and Lakota:  
[www.sicc.sk.ca/products.html](http://www.sicc.sk.ca/products.html)  
Our Languages resource page:  
[www.sicc.sk.ca/heritage/sils/ourlanguages/](http://www.sicc.sk.ca/heritage/sils/ourlanguages/)

SoligSoft Inc.  
416–165 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave S.  
Saskatoon, SK  
S7K 1L8  
[www.soligsoft.com](http://www.soligsoft.com)

CD-ROMs and Online Language Learning for Plains, Swampy and Woodland Cree; Dakota Ihanktohan and Isanti; Dene “K,” “M,” “N” and “S”; Lakota; Nakota; Ojibwa; Salteaux; Stoney.

Stoney Language (Alexis Nakota First Nation)  
[www.alexisnakotasioux.com/4/4-1.asp](http://www.alexisnakotasioux.com/4/4-1.asp)

Yamada Language Centre: Cree Fonts (for Mac)  
<http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/fonts/cree.html>

## Organizations

Aboriginal Education Research Centre, University of Saskatchewan  
[www.usask.ca/education/aerc/](http://www.usask.ca/education/aerc/)

Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre

[www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/index.htm](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/index.htm)

“The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre is composed of a consortium of more than 80 organizations and individuals from across the country working together to create a path for the improvement of Aboriginal learning in Canada. The Lead Organizations for the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre are two key national institutions that have a rich and relevant knowledge base from which this centre will evolve: the Aboriginal Education Research Centre at the University of Saskatchewan and the First Nations Adult and Higher Education Consortium.”

(retrieved March 6, 2007, from [http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/WhoWeAre/?Language=EN)

[KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/WhoWeAre/?Language=EN](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/WhoWeAre/?Language=EN))

(A number of the authors referred to in this review are involved in the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, including Marie Battiste, Vivian Ayoungman and Leroy Little Bear.)

Aboriginal Youth Network

Box 34007 Kingsway PO

Edmonton, AB

T5G 3G4

[www.ayn.ca](http://www.ayn.ca)

Assembly of First Nations

[www.afn.ca](http://www.afn.ca)

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

[www.abo-peoples.org](http://www.abo-peoples.org)

Government of Canada:

Aboriginal Canada Portal

[www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/en-frames/index.html](http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/en-frames/index.html)

First Nations SchoolNet

[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/edu/fnsn/index.asp](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/edu/fnsn/index.asp)

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

[www.itk.ca](http://www.itk.ca)

Métis Nation of Alberta

[www.albertametis.com/MNAHome.aspx](http://www.albertametis.com/MNAHome.aspx)

Métis National Council

[www.metisnation.ca](http://www.metisnation.ca)

Native Women's Association of Canada

[www.nwac-hq.org](http://www.nwac-hq.org)



Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network Inc.  
[www.aboriginal.sk.literacy.ca/home.htm](http://www.aboriginal.sk.literacy.ca/home.htm)

Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education  
<http://www.wncp.ca/>

## Post-Secondary Programs

Note: Programs in Western Canada are focused on in this section.

## Language and Linguistics Programs

Department of Indian Languages, Literatures & Linguistics, First Nations University of Canada (Affiliated with University of Regina)  
[www.firstnationsuniversity.ca](http://www.firstnationsuniversity.ca)

BA (General and Honours) in Cree Language Studies  
BA (General and Honours) in Salteaux Language Studies  
Minors in Cree, Salteaux and Nakoda Language Studies  
First Nations Language Instructors' Certificate Program (beginning summer 2007 and continuing for three summers, plus fall 2008): Cree, Salteaux, Dakota and Nakoda

First Nations Languages Program, University of British Columbia  
<http://fnlg.arts.ubc.ca/>

Department of Linguistics, University of British Columbia  
[www.linguistics.ubc.ca/index.htm](http://www.linguistics.ubc.ca/index.htm)  
BA, Major in First Nations Languages and Linguistics

## Native Studies Programs

Department of Native Studies, Brandon University  
[www.brandonu.ca/academic/arts/Departments/Native%20Studies/nativestudies.htm](http://www.brandonu.ca/academic/arts/Departments/Native%20Studies/nativestudies.htm)  
BA (General) 3 and 4 year, minors in Native Languages or Aboriginal Art

Department of Indigenous Studies, First Nations University of Canada (Affiliated with University of Regina)  
[www.firstnationsuniversity.ca](http://www.firstnationsuniversity.ca)

Faculty of Native Studies, University of Alberta  
[www.ualberta.ca/NATIVESTUDIES/](http://www.ualberta.ca/NATIVESTUDIES/)  
BA Native Studies/BEd combined  
BA Native Studies (General and Honours)  
Offers some Cree courses and one Dene course

First Nations Studies, University of British Columbia  
<http://fnsp.arts.ubc.ca>  
BA, Major or Minor in First Nations Studies

International Indigenous Studies Program, University of Calgary  
[www.ucalgary.ca/futurestudents/ss\\_indg](http://www.ucalgary.ca/futurestudents/ss_indg)  
BA Major in International Indigenous Studies  
BA Minor in Indigenous Studies  
May include Aboriginal language courses (e.g., Blackfoot, Cree)

Native American Studies, University of Lethbridge  
[www.uleth.ca/fas/nas/](http://www.uleth.ca/fas/nas/)  
BA in Native American Studies  
Offers courses in Blackfoot and Cree

Department of Native Studies, University of Manitoba  
[http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/departments/native\\_studies/](http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/departments/native_studies/)  
3 or 4 year BA, Advanced Major  
Offers courses in Cree and Ojibway

Department of Native Studies, University of Saskatchewan: [www.usask.ca/nativestudies/](http://www.usask.ca/nativestudies/)  
3 and 4 year BAs, as well as honours/double honours  
Offers two Cree courses

Indigenous Studies Program, University of Victoria  
<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2006/FACS/InPr/ISPr.html>  
BA, Minor in Indigenous Studies

#### Teacher Development Programs

Program for the Education of Native Teachers (PENT), Brandon University  
[www.brandonu.ca/academic/education/pent/index.asp](http://www.brandonu.ca/academic/education/pent/index.asp)

Department of Indian Education, First Nations University (Affiliated with University of Regina)  
[www.firstnationsuniversity.ca](http://www.firstnationsuniversity.ca)  
BEd Elementary or Secondary (Indian Education)  
BEd Elementary or Secondary After Degree (Indian Education)  
BEd Secondary, Indian/Native Studies (standard or after degree)

Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP)

[www.usask.ca/education/program/abprog.htm](http://www.usask.ca/education/program/abprog.htm)

Offered jointly by the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina,  
and held in La Ronge.

Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP)

[www.gdins.org/GDIProgramsandServices.shtml#suntep](http://www.gdins.org/GDIProgramsandServices.shtml#suntep)

Four-year, fully accredited BEd offered by the Gabriel Dumont Institute in  
cooperation with Saskatchewan Learning, the University of Saskatchewan and the  
University of Regina.

Native Indian Teacher Education Program, University of British Columbia

<http://teach.educ.ubc.ca/bachelor/nitep/>

BEd Elementary or Secondary

Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP), University of Saskatchewan

[www.usask.ca/education/itep/index.html](http://www.usask.ca/education/itep/index.html)