Nahkawēwin Revitalization: A Mini Language Nest Created With Hope and Determination

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Author's Note

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Abstract

This research based on my master's thesis explores Nahkawēwin language revitalization. This study draws on the language nest model, which first originated with Maori grandmothers and their grandchildren in the 1970s. In this study, my mother and I created what I refer to as a "mini" language nest in both of our homes to teach my children Nahkawēwin in a holistic manner. I call this a "mini" language nest because our nest only involved myself, my mother, and my children, when other language nests around the world have had multiple grandmothers and children who are participants of the language nest. This article aims to show how this approach to language nests can be used to revitalize or revive a language using intergeneration learning and teaching. In this study, I reflect on the different challenges one may face while creating a mini language nest, and how one might overcome these challenges through different language strategies, frameworks, and teaching tools. I do not wish to present language nests as a foolproof solution; rather, I share the reality of how one thought or intention can change the outcome of language learning in a positive manner. The language nest did not only teach my children their language, it brought us together with compassion, enthusiasm, and hope.

Keywords: Indigenous, language, revitalization, revival, language nest, linguistic landscape, intergenerational learning.

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My name is Denise Kennedy, and I am a Saulteaux woman from Pasqua First Nation. I am a mother, wife, teacher and student. My passion is language revitalization and language research. Presently, my focus is rejuvenating the spoken language in our community. In this paper, I will take my readers through a study that I conducted with the hope and objective to revive the language with my children within the walls of their own home and their grandmother's home, through intergenerational learning and teaching.

This paper comes out of a study which explored Nahkawēwin (also known as Anihšināpēmowin) language revitalization. This research draws on the language nest model, which first originated with Māori grandmothers and their grandchildren in 1973 (Chambers, 2015). As a language teacher and also as a mother, it was important for me to research different avenues of language learning that would benefit my children within their own home. I also wanted to keep in mind the needs of my community and other communities who are also seeking ways to revive or revitalize their languages. Seeking answers to important questions through research is critical to addressing issues of recovering and maintaining languages (Kirkness, 2002).

In my research, my mother and I created a mini language nest in both of our homes to teach my children the gift of their language. I refer to my approach as a "mini" language nest because it only involved myself, my mother, and my children, and because it was for a short period of time during evenings and weekends. Though there may be different ways of learning the language in one's community, it is important to bring the language back into the homes, so the families are learning together (Norris, 2006). The language nest not only brought the language alive in our homes, it brought determination, hope, and connection. Though times were challenging and sometimes very frustrating because of English dominance in our society and in our homes, I found different ways and used different teaching tools in our language nest to make language learning the main focus for my children.

In this article, I present data from my research which illustrates how language nests can help families and communities revive or revitalize their languages within their own homes through intergenerational learning. Family is the most central and critical domain in the maintenance and reproduction of language (Schwartz, 2008). This research is not only important for my family, but also for the families, parents, and children in my community. The research is intended to give hope and encouragement to parents and families, that they can be a part of their children(s) language learning, whether they know a lot of the language, or a little bit of the language. Pushor (2012), a teacher and education researcher, suggested that we as teachers/educators and schools need to get "parental engagement" involved in children's learning (p. 476). Pushor's research suggested that parents need to work side-by-side with the teachers to give children the proper education that is needed for growth because parents have been the teachers since the children's birth. This is exactly what needs to be done with language learning. Language learning needs to be done within the home, with parental involvement and intergenerational transmission.

Though challenges may arise, we as Indigenous peoples must keep striving towards our language goals, and to find ways that work for our children and family members in language learning. This article offers insight of how language nest can work well, and what language learning tools may be used to have a successful language nest in our homes and communities.

Background

The situation of Indigenous languages is diverse across Canada. For some communities, revitalization is needed, while in other communities, maintenance is needed (Galley et al., 2016). The most common step to language revitalization in communities are school-based programs, children's programs outside the school, adult language programs, documentation and material development, and homebased (Gomashie, 2019). Being a language teacher in my community, I have seen the success of students learning the language, but it needs to go farther than the classroom. Language learning needs to go into the homes, so the children have people to speak with outside of the school. School-based language learning is probably the most common form of language learning, but it is not a method that creates fluent speakers (Blair et al., 2002; McIvor & Anisman, 2018). I believe that the language needs to go back into the homes so families can start to speak their language together as a whole. Speaking one's language in the home provides the opportunity to normalize the use of endangered languages and supports the process of intergenerational transmission from parent to child (Norris, 2004).

Language immersion is a common strategy used for reversing a language shift, with the idea that language learners will use the language outside of the school with family and friends (Fishman, 2001). Language immersion programming offers the more effective solution to the challenge of language maintenance (Morcom & Roy, 2019). Immersion programs are built on the premise that the best way to learn a language is to create an environment where the language, and only the language is constantly used (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

Language nests are seen as one of the most successful language immersion practices around the world. Language revitalization is the main goal to achieve while creating a language nest, but there are other benefits of the language nests such as intergenerational interactions, cooperation and respect (Delaine, 2010). Research suggests that language nests show promise for the healing of intergenerational relationships and the reclamation of family ways of knowing and being (Chambers, 2014). For this study, the main goal was for the language to be used in the homes where my children were when not at school. Creating a nest was to show our families and other families that language can be taught and learned at home. Families should use the language at home as the primary language of communication so that it becomes the first language of young children (Hinton, 2001). Hinton (2013) also suggested that parents who are speakers of the language should use their language skills with children and family. Family is the most central and critical domain in the maintenance and reproduction of language (Schwartz, 2008). Chambers (2014), like other scholars who have studied language nests, said that family-based approaches to language nest development and delivery are promising approaches to developing and re-establishing emotional, mental, social, and cultural connections between young children and Elders. As one can see with all the positive outcomes besides language fluency development within children, there is a lot more that comes along with this process of language revitalization. It not only creates speakers of the language, but it creates a well-balanced holistic individual.

Other language strategies can be used in the language nests to make it easier for language learning in English-dominant areas. In a Seneca language nest (Borgia & Dowdy, 2010), Western strategies along with traditional strategies were used while teaching the children. Activities were available to the children when they were ready to partake in them. During the day the students learned the language through non-verbal gestures, Total Physical Response (TPR) language teaching, repetition, and flashcards. Children learned about clothes, food, numbers, pets, commands, names, family terms, questions, observations, and songs (Borgia & Dowdy, 2010).

Documentation is also a suggested tool for families who do not have fluent speakers in their homes, which would be in a lot of cases in our communities today. Documentation is the preservation of stories, songs, prayers, and dialogues in the language through audio and visual recordings of speakers. These audio and visual recordings can be transcribed into written form and used in the home with the families. Some suggest that documentation can aid language revitalization strategies in a positive way, but in itself it will not create speakers (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2020). On the other hand, Hinton (2011), argues that even the so-called extinct languages are being revitalized through the use of documentation. Upon review of the literature, these are just some of the language revitalization strategies that can be used. Communities and families need to have a clear understanding of their goals before attempting either language revitalization or language revival (Montgomery-Anderson, 2008). Communities are recognizing that long-term planning is a crucial first step towards long-term continuation or revival of their language (McIvor & Anisman, 2018). Language nests should be considered within more communities because they are a great way to bring that language back into the homes with families. Language nests are seen to be one of the more effective immersion practices for early childhood learners. They have been recognized internationally as successful means for language revitalization, but this method is not as present as it should be in Indigenous Canada (McIvor, 2015). I believe that this is because we as leaders, educators, and parents have become so used to living in a colonial setting, not only within our own homes but within the classrooms and communities as well, that we forget to implement our own Indigenous teachings, languages, and worldviews in our everyday lives. Indigenous scholars suggest that Indigenous frameworks cannot be implemented unless Indigenous people accept that their own worldviews, environments, languages, and forms of communication have value for their present and future, and they need to understand how they can help to reclaim and restore them (Battiste, 2013). My research not only aims to bring the language into my home for my children, but to also bring language nests into other Indigenous communities. We need to start decolonizing our ways of language learning, and this is one way.

Methodology

The study that informs this article set out to answer the following research questions: What are the challenges of the language nest and what were the successes and outcomes of the language nest?

I used both Western and Indigenous knowledge methods to design my research for Indigenous language revitalization. I used the qualitative approach, consistent with Western ideology and research methods, when necessary. Qualitative research addresses issues by using one of the following three approaches: (a) grasping the subjective meaning of issues from the perspectives of the participants, (b) latent meanings of a situation are in focus, and (c) social practices and the life world of the participants are described (Flick, 2011). Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations (Mack, 2005).

I used the process of self-locating throughout my whole study. As Kovach (2010) stated, preparation assumes self-awareness and the ability to situate self within the research. Self-location is used mainly in qualitative research approaches. It allows the researcher to self-reflect one's life in their research. It allows us to use our truths and our experiences as means of validation in our writing. Self-locating in my research is similar to narrative research methodology. Lewis (2014) stated that "the researcher lives within the research and is committed to studying phenomena in their natural settings" (p. 164). With narrative research, just as in self-locating, you make the

research a part of who you are. As a narrative researcher, I am not only personally involved in this study, but we tend to change as researchers and as individuals as our research and outcomes unfold (Mills & Birks, 2014). As Kovach (2005) stated, Indigenous research allows us to transform into what we are learning. Wilson (2008) stated that, "If research doesn't change you as a person, then you haven't done it right" (p. 135). Wilson's research suggests that when we place ourselves into different studies, we are there to learn and to enhance our own communities, not so much to enhance the people or communities that we are studying.

Our language nest started in September, and because of the new school and work year we were only able to work with our language nest in the evenings and weekends. We would meet at my mother's home, where we would cook, clean and visit in the language. We then would go to my house, where we would play games, play in general and do house chores. I would use teaching tools such as puzzles, board games or card games to play with my sons, we would even go shopping at the grocery store in the language. The drive to the store would be in the language. We used the language whenever and where ever possible.

The data collection that I used in my study included "close observation" which is when the researcher is not only observing but also a participant of the study. Van Manen (1990, as cited in Bjorbækmo & Engelsrud, 2011) stated that "the best way into a person's lifeworld is to participate in it" (p. 29). This type of study allows the researcher to write about what they have experienced in their research, rather than what they have observed in their research.

During the language nest sessions, I interviewed my mother through audio and visual aids in both my home and her home. These interviews were conducted in both the Nahkawē language and the English language. I later transcribed these recordings into a Word document so I could refer to the interviews during my data analysis. I also took pictures of my children engaged in speech and activity with my mother during language use. This documentation allowed me to reflect on the day and what was successful or not so successful in language learning.

I also found it important to use the conversational method throughout my data collection. This allows the researchers to collect information through story telling. Honoring orality in research not only brings the participants and the researcher a significant relationship, but also it acknowledges a holistic and natural way of collecting data. In my data collection, it was important for me to use my mother's stories about language and worldview. During the interviews with my mother, I asked her questions about her thoughts about language in the community, from the past and present perspective, would she have made any changes in her decisions about language learning in the past and as a grandparent were her hopes and dreams of language learning in the home.

Data and Discussion

I believe that for our Nation to be successful, we must first be successful at home. Being successful at home means using the language at home. The language nest designed for this study demonstrates that this immersion practice can work for language revitalization and being successful in language learning. In this section, I will share and discuss data about the challenges that arose during the language nest.

Challenges of the Language Nest

> My sons are just not taking to the language, they are shy, uninterested or uncomfortable speaking the language. What can we do to overcome this? What do

> we need more of? This is my fault. Why are my sons having a hard time with language learning? (Journal Entry, Sept 10, 2018)

In my journal entries, it was apparent how little the language was enforced or encouraged in my home prior to beginning this study. I believe that was because of our English-dominated society that we live in. We used our colonial way of thinking and doing things because it was the more common way of expressing ourselves, which affected my children's use of their language. As a mother, this was a very sad realization. Time restraints also played a negative impact on the language nest, because the language nest was only done in the evenings and weekends due to work and school and other everyday happenings. My children wanted time to play on their electronic devices, or to play outside on their bikes. They did not want to spend their evenings or weekends speaking the language. Our time limit was just too short for natural speaking to happen.

English dominance was probably one of the more challenging factors to our language nest. My sons wanted to do things that they were used to doing, but these things consisted of only English. Their main concerns were things like television watching, playing their games or going on their iPads. English dominance was so severe that people who were not involved in the language nest, would come into our homes and speak only in English. Similarly, if the television was on, it was only in English. This was probably a moment that I would describe as the breaking point in my research; I felt like the constant intrusion from English would either break my research or make my research. In order to be successful in our language learning and teaching, we had to find a way to get past English dominance. We needed to appreciate and acknowledge the small successes of language learning. What I have learned in all of this is that with patience and appreciation of our languages, those small successes can surpass the challenges of English dominance. I learned to accept the challenges and work past those with language goals in focus. In the next section, I share some of the stories of these successes.

Successes of the Language Nest

> After my disappointment the other day in my language nest, I have come to realize that language work is hard, no matter where we are. Especially in the world we live in today. I realize I would have to be far away in the bush with no electronics or people who want to speak English to have a fully immersed language nest. I have come to terms that I will not get the language nest I wanted, but I will get the language work that my sons and I need. I have to stop depending on my mom to make this right, and instead value her words, her teachings, and her language use. I need to step up and make language learning mine, and use it in my own home, even if mom is not there. Creator help me. (Journal Entry, September 22, 2017)

I finally let go of the thought that only Nahkawēwin was going to be present, and accepted that the English language would still be present. Instead of making language-learning a task, I shifted my perspective and tried to make it natural. No matter how badly I wanted this study to be nothing but immersion, I came to realize that it was impossible to do this due to our situation. We either went to work or we went to school where the English language was a constant presence. If we wanted to watch a movie together as a family, it would be in the English language. I finally concluded that in order to be fully immersed in the Nahkawēwin we would have to live away from civilization, away from electronics, away from stores or anything that used the English language, and that meant that we could not go to work or to school either. Once I wrapped my head around this reality, I started to work with what I had.

I was also guilty of using the English language naturally, more so than Nahkawēwin. So, I needed to make a language plan for myself and for my sons so that the language could be used all the time throughout the day, and not only during the mini language nest allotted time. I spent time researching various at-home language learning tools. I found that the key to being successful in language learning was to have patience and to have fun, as well as to realize that some language use was better than no language use at all in our homes. I had to stop thinking about all the things that I thought were wrong with my mini language nest and start to appreciate that this was indeed happening. My children were hearing it, they were involved in it, and they were learning.

I had to understand that even though my mother could not be with us from sun-up to sundown, the language could still be present. I, as a mother, had to make it my responsibility to teach my sons their language. Even though it would have been easier for my own mother to be there, I had to do this also in our home, from morning to bedtime. Using our language was harder than anticipated when we had become so accustomed to using the English language in everything we did. I had to start thinking of our language use at home as not just something for my research, but also as our new way of life. I used the language as much as I could and hoped that my sons would eventually respond back to me in the language but, for now, at least they were hearing it. I had to think of ways to make our language more alive, more present, and more important. So, I used at-home learning tools, such as labelling our home in the language, which would remind us to use the language. Until language use became natural, this needed to be done. I needed it to be visible as a reminder to us to shift from English to Nahkawē.

Teaching Tools in My Home

I needed to do more that would encourage my sons to use more of the language. We started playing different language games with the kids, games they liked, such as bingo. In doing so, the kids were learning different subjects in the language, such as verbs, feelings, activities, and weather conditions. For them to win the game they had to say "*pahkinake"* (I win) to claim a prize. The boys enjoyed playing this game. We also played things like *Go fish*, in the language, which they both enjoyed. Using games and stories to engage the boys seemed to be working to a certain extent. I started to buy animal and number puzzles to become more engaged with my youngest son.

> I bought the boys some puzzles for counting and learning animals today; I hope they will learn with these. I hope these encourage them to use the language more … at this point I will use anything to get them interested. (Journal entry, September 21, 2017)

We did the puzzles in the language, learning the different wild animals and farm animals. While playing with these things, I asked my youngest son "*awēnēn owē?"* (Who is this?) with no response back, so I went through the animals by myself and pretended to forget what some of the animals were, and he responded to me in Nahkawē. He laughed so hard because he found it hilarious that I forgot how to say the animal's names, or so he thought. In reality, I was creating a (pretend) language gap in my knowledge that he could then fill with his own knowledge. I also did this with colors, shapes, and numbers. It was little strategies like this that I had to use to determine if he was learning the language. To my delight, I found that he was.

> I had to trick my baby son into speaking Saulteaux today! And to my surprise he actually knew what I was talking about. It was nothing big, but it was big for us, big for our family. I pretended not to know what the animals were on the puzzles, he thought it was hilarious that I didn't know … so he corrected me! By using the

> language!!!! .... I am so happy! It was a good day today! Ci mīkwēc. (Journal Entry, September 2017)

When he got the words right, I would praise him by clapping my hands and saying "*minō tōtam"* (good job). He appreciated this praise and encouragement a lot. When he saw that his brother was using the language, he would use the language more often. Their motivation and success were contagious between them. For my younger son, his older brother's language learning played a big role in his language learning.

Linguistic Landscaping

I started to make the language visible in my home. This was not so much so the children could learn to read and write it, but so that they would see it every day and would be encouraged to use the language more.

> Today I made labels to put up around our home. These are done to remind me that we should be using the language rather than English. Even I have a hard time to use the language all the time. I am putting the labels up, not to teach my sons to read and write in the language, but instead to remind them of what we should be doing/ speaking instead … I believe this will help us, and will work for us. (Journal entry, September 21, 2017)

I did this to show my sons that our language was important and valued in our home. This idea came from *linguistic landscape theory* (Dagenais et al., 2009). This research showed that the languages seen in print around us indicates what languages are prominent and valued in public and private spaces and also says something about the social positioning of the people who identify with those languages (Dagenais et al., 2009). I used this approach not only to encourage my children to use the language, but also to remind myself that I needed to use the language as much as possible with my children. I created language labels and put them in the appropriate areas throughout the house. For instance, at the main door, I put labels up that read things like "*niwī mācā šikwa"* (I am going to leave now), or in the kitchen labels like *"kinōntēskatē na?"* (Are you hungry?). These types of labels were all over the house and they stayed there until I did not need them to remind me to use the language anymore.

Pōsīns

I searched for other ways to keep their attention focused on language learning. I wanted to find a way that would catch my youngest son's attention and keep it, while being able to use the language. This was on my mind and I would research and search different avenues for language learning amongst younger children. One evening I was just randomly flipping through my social media when I noticed someone from the community was giving away a kitten. While I was looking at pictures of the kitten, I was saying in my head "*pōsīns*," which means "cat" in Nahkawēwin. An idea came to my head that I wanted to get this kitten for my sons, not only to have a new pet, but to use this kitten as a language tool.

> This evening I picked up a kitten from the community. I normally wouldn't do this, but I needed the cat to be a teaching tool. Just maybe this cat will motivate my youngest to learn more of the language? I can tell him to feed the cat? To give him milk, to hug him, to take care of him. The kittens name will be pōsīns … tāwā pōsīyēns (welcome little cat). (Journal entry, September, 2017)

I brought it home and introduced the cat to my sons. I told them "*pōsīns išinihkāso*," which means *"his name is cat."* Both boys fell in love with the kitten right away and were excited to learn that the cat was their new family pet. They did not know that this new family member was to be a language tool for them to learn from.

I told them that "*pōsīns*" only knew the Nahkawē language, so we had to talk to *pōsīns* in Nahkawē, because that's all it understood. They took to the rules of speaking to the kitten right away. They would say things like "*ampē omā pōsīns"* (come here cat). "*wīhsinin pōsīns"* (eat cat), "*minihkwēn tōhtōhsāpo pōsīns"* (drink milk cat) or "*minihkwēn nipi"* (drink water) *nipān pōsīns* (sleep cat). These were some of the basic words and sentences that the boys used for communicating with the kitten. I started to make daily routines for the boys to follow with the kitten: Some of the rules for the cat were *Ahsam pōsīn* (feed the cat), *nipi mīna pōsīns* (give the cat water), *mīna tōhtōsāpo pōsīns* (give the cat milk), *nākitokās pōsīns* (take care of the cat), *pēhki a pōsīn* (clean the cat), *sāwēnim pōsīns* (love the cat). Though *pōsīns* could not respond to them in the language, my boys were using the language with something that they liked and cared about, something that was their own. This was a good teaching tool to use when their grandmother was not home with us. When searching, thinking, and desperate for something that would interest my sons, *pōsīns* did a wonderful job.

Reclaiming Domains

After the success of *pōsīns*, I started researching more ideas for both my home and my mother's home. I needed things or activities that we needed to use the language for, things that *pōsīns* could not help with. Hinton (2008) suggests that as language learning and teaching is to take place in the homes, we should set manageable goals. I found a framework for language learning called "reclaiming home domains" (Zahir, 2018). Zahir (2018) describes the process of reclaiming domains in the following way:

> A language nest area has activities that we do regularly. For example, in the kitchen we wash dishes, put away food, make a salad, sweep the floor, etc. We call these activities domains. When we decide to do these activities only in the language, we call this process reclaiming domains. (p. 161)

This language framework seemed to put language learning in a simpler and more manageable context.

> Today I started a new language revitalization framework, called "reclaiming domains." This is where I take one part of my home and master it. I think I will have the same idea when doing this, but go about it in a different way. I will, for instance, use my baby son's bath time to teach him how to say have a bath, wash your hair, wash your belly, wash your legs, etc. I will do this in different areas throughout the house. I am quite excited to do this … there are so many different ways one can learn the language, if you wanted to. It is for sure a lot of work, but it is work that is worth it in so many ways. (Journal Entry, September, 2017)

I began by setting small goals, instead of rushing things and making impossible goals for language learning. I started with bedtime. When it was bedtime, I would speak only the language to the boys "*kawišimon"* (go to bed) from "*kāšīnkwēn"* (wash your face), "*kišipinkinīnīcīn"* (brush your teeth), "*awēpison"* (get dressed), "*kipān kiskīnsikōn"* (close your eyes), "*nipān"* (sleep) "*mino tipihkan"* (good night). During bath times I would tell my youngest son to "*Kīšīpi kisitēn"*

(wash your feet), "*Kīšīpi kikitēn*" (wash your legs), "*kīšīpi kinikēn"* (wash your arms), "*kīšīpi kimihsat"* (wash your belly), "*kīšipi kitīhēn"* (wash your bottom), "*kīšīpi kistikwanēn"* (wash your head). At first, I would have to motion to him what I was saying, then he eventually started to understand what I was telling him.

I noticed with these specific domains in the house, it was making our language learning goals more attainable and successful. My children were starting to understand and respond to more words and phrases. I started this framework by introducing certain words, for example "*ostikwan*" (his/her head)**.**" Once my boys started to understand the words, I started to make them into phrases, like "*kīšīpi kistikwanēn*" (wash your head)**.** Being consistent with the reclaimed domains and repetition played a major role in my son's language learning.

I was quite fond of this framework because what seemed impossible one day was now full of possibilities, possibilities that would change the lives of my sons. These possibilities also influenced the way that I viewed language teaching not only to my children but also to the community's children. The main idea was to create enough reclaimed domains in my home and my mother's home that our homes would eventually feel like a mini language nest.

My goal to create a mini language nest with my mother and sons was to show the importance of learning our Indigenous languages in the comfort of our own homes with family and Elders. I walked into this study thinking that this would be an easy task because I had everything I needed for it to be successful. I was humbled very quickly; I was taught that language learning is hard work, it takes time, and it may take us down different roads and different ways of learning and teaching. While living in a society where English is the dominant language, it is hard to teach and learn your language in an immersed environment. We would need a place where there are no televisions, no radios, no stores, or internet and where there is nothing but our languages and the basic things around us. But, living in a fast-paced society where people are constantly moving makes this utopia impossible.

So, my study demonstrates that we stand and deal with the situations we are in and make it work to our advantage. We use different ways of teaching, we forgive ourselves for not doing this with our children since birth, we keep moving forward with our languages, we keep teaching them and adapting them to this new world we live in, and we never give up, we only do better.

Intergenerational Transmission

Elder speakers are seen as a precious resource for efforts to document, maintain, or reclaim a language, and their importance to language revitalization is widely recognized (Albers & Supahan Albers, 2013). In this instance my mother was not only the grandmother to my children, but she is a respected elder of our community. It was imperative to have my mother in our nest, not only for her wisdom, compassion, and love for her grandchildren and the language, but as her overall role to the community and other people.

My mother brought calmness and encouragement to our nest through her stories, and through her understanding and compassionate heart. Though the language was natural to her, she was able to slow down her language teaching for the sake of her grandchildren. She started to implement some of the language tools that I had researched into our language teaching. She was able to engage in games, reclaiming domains and other teaching strategies that worked for my sons. Unknowingly she was using teaching tools, such as total physical response in teaching my sons how to cook, clean, and play. She would use a lot of repetition when speaking to the boys and

praise when they would understand or respond to her. These are strategies that my mother did not possess in the beginning of our nest, she had seen what worked for my sons and their language understanding and learning. My mother was very encouraging, forgiving, and understanding when it came to language use and learning in the home. She set the tone for the day, and she grounded my expectations of how "I thought" our language nest should be:

> Mom: As long as the kids are having fun my girl and learning and hearing the language, everything will be okay. If they feel you being down and negative about language learning, then they won't want any part of it either.
>
> Denise: I know mom, I am starting to realize this now. As long as we get language in, and as long as they are hearing it as much as possible …. they will get it.
>
> Mom: kēkēt (true). (Journal entry, September 2019)

My mother gave me the courage and encouragement to further implement teaching and learning strategies in my own home, even when she wasn't there to guide us. Our togetherness in language learning and teaching, our togetherness as a family brought our relationships that much closer together.

Discussion

The primary focus of this research was to explore the challenges and successes of creating a mini language nest in the common home for language revitalization. Though the intent was to bring intergenerational learning to my children with my mother and myself, it was also to show my community and other communities that this language learning practice can be done. The research is a lot about forgiveness, understanding, and patience. I walked into this research thinking our mini language nest would run smoothly because I thought we had all of the resources needed to be successful but instead I was hit with the hardships of language revival in an English-dominated society. I was discouraged not only as a researcher but also as a mother when my children did not take to the language right away. Through guidance from my mother and other language mentors, I learned to shift my way of thinking and to instead celebrate small successes in language learning. I learned that I, as the mother, needed to find ways that worked for my children's language learning and to step outside of the box that I created for myself and our language nest.

It is our responsibilities as parents to help our children to learn in life, and also to learn our Indigenous languages. There are language frameworks that are already created that can work well for families just learning to use the language in their homes. Linguistic landscaping, reclaiming domains, using family pets, singing songs, playing games, and the list goes on. Our homes should be the main source of learning and teaching, and language nests can support this learning.

I know in many cases in communities, not all families are fortunate enough to have a fluent speaker ready and willing to help, or have a fluent speaker in the home or family at all. I believe more research needs to be conducted with adult language learners in a family environment so they can teach their children the language. I believe it is fine if families are learning together. At this point and time, any amount of language use and learning is great. If parents can model language learning in their homes, for their children, language revitalization would take place more often and throughout more homes. People need to learn how to learn and help one another teach the language, even if it is done amongst each other without any fluent speakers. Language learners, with a lot of patience and determination have the ability to learn their language with the proper tools.

Perhaps language immersion models such as the Master-Apprentice program, also known as the Mentor-Apprentice Program in British Columbia, can be implemented more in communities. More research studies and more knowledge about this program can benefit adult language learners and set a foundation for them to learn the language for themselves and then to implement the language with their families and children. The Master Apprentice program allows adult learners to be partnered up with a fluent speaker or elder to learn the language in real life situations, which can include performing traditional tasks and skills. It could also involve teaching home concepts as cooking and cleaning etc. If a person commits to this learning style for a long period of time, the apprentice will be at least conversationally proficient in their language and ready to be language teachers to other people (Montgomery-Anderson, 2008).

Other language revitalization models that can be researched are models such the reclaiming home domains. Families can be taught this tool to use in their homes as a learning experience for language learning and teaching. One does not necessarily need a fluent speaker to do this, which could give people and families the hope of language learning at their own pace. A lot of the time not having the proper resources or enough resources for people is discouraging enough that they do not to try or follow through with language learning, let alone revitalization. The reclaiming domains model would make language learning that much more attainable and motivating to pursue because it is less overwhelming for the learner. As Hinton (2013) explained, in order to strive towards the larger goal of language nests, it serves teacher learners to set smaller, manageable goals. I do agree with this, but also if people were to know and understand the concept of reclaiming domains, this model can be used for families to create their own mini language nests in the home. Once one is taught to reclaim domains in their homes, they can eventually create mini language nests in different parts of their homes, which would eventually lead to a whole language nest in the home. The goal in today's language learning is to use the language as much as you can whenever possible.

For myself, my future study will relate to ways to implement these language revitalization models into our communities and homes, and to build the confidence within our Nation to want to learn the language and be consistent in using it. It is important to teach families that it is fine to start with no resources, that it is okay to be your own resource, that it is okay to make mistakes, and that slow progress is better than no progress. Our Elders, our knowledge keepers, and our language keepers are very important and guide the way to our Indigenous way of life and worldviews, but when they leave this world, we cannot use that as an excuse to sit and ponder the would haves, the could haves, and the should haves. It is imperative for us to live in a world where our elders have showed us enough knowledge to grasp our own language learning and way of life as Indigenous people.

Conclusion

Taking the initiative to retain or revitalize a language is hard but rewarding work. A lot of times, we have a plan set in our minds that we think will be successful for our families' or communities' learning. Once this plan is altered in some way, we get discouraged and want to stop. No matter how hard language learning is, we cannot stop, we have to keep going. We have to learn different avenues of learning and teaching the language that fit the needs of our families, children, and community. We have to celebrate the small successes and find the encouragement to keep going. Our culture and language are who we are as Indigenous people; we cannot just give up when times get hard. Our children and our communities deserve so much more than that.

Different learning tools need to be implemented with different people in different situations. What may work for some people may not work for others. Encouragement and determination are big factors in retaining a language, especially when it comes to maintaining a language nest. Living in a fast-paced society where English is the dominant language in every facet of daily life can sometimes be discouraging. Even though English is the dominant language in our communities and resources are scarce, language learning is achievable through research of what our families and communities need. Our Indigenous tongues need to be normalized and used every day, everywhere, and anytime. Language learning should be taught in the homes through intergenerational learning with parents, grandparents, and siblings. If resources are scarce and fluent speakers are not available, language revitalization models such as the Master-Apprentice Program and/ or reclaiming home domains can be implemented for adult language learning, which can eventually be transmitted to the rest of the family for learning. Language learning/retention/revitalization is a long process, and it is a hard process, but it is necessary.

This study is a small language revitalization model that is filled with many tools that can be used by anyone who is seeking to revitalize, retain, and learn their language. One need not depend on anyone for fluency, funding, or resources if one has patience, determination and the willingness to try. Language learners cannot expect to become fluent speakers overnight, or within a week or within a month; language learning takes time. When times get tough, language learning still needs to be done. Small accomplishments in language learning are still accomplishments. People have to get over the fears of failing. Our languages make us who we are as Indigenous people.

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