Painting the picture of Indigenous Language Revitalization in Canada: Context and practices[*]

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Land Acknowledgment

McGill University, where the bulk of the work for this research was carried out, is located on the unceded land which has long served as the home of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquoian) peoples, and which has been a meeting place between the Haudenosaunee and other Indigenous peoples, including the Anishinaabeg. I respectfully acknowledge these peoples as the true stewards of the land on which I now live and work.

Abstract

A growing body of research points to the importance of bringing Indigenous concerns – as expressed and understood by Indigenous peoples themselves – to the forefront of research and other academic efforts. While Indigenous scholars have worked to outline a research paradigm grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems, university-based scholars, both Indigenous and non-, have affirmed that academic researchers can, under the right circumstances, work with Indigenous communities in a manner which respects Indigenous soverignty. This line of research is especially relevant in the field of Linguistics, where collaboration among university-based researchers and community-based speakers is often essential to ethical and successful projects. In this paper, which has grown out of McGill's (2018) Symposium on the University's Role in Supporting Indigenous Languages, I aim to accomplish two mutually reinforcing goals: (i) to outline the historical, political, and social context in which language reclamation and revitalization work takes place in Canada today; and (ii) to examine the ways in which universities and those working within them can better support Indigenous peoples in their efforts to reclaim, revitalize, strengthen, and maintain their languages, especially within the Canadian context. I elaborate upon these lessons by echoing the ideas of Symposium participants through the words of various scholars and Indigenous language champions from around the world.

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1. Introduction

This paper examines the context in which the reclamation, revitalization, and maintenance of Indigenous languages in Canada is taking place today. I aim, first of all, to provide the reader with a snapshot of this context by looking at the historical, social, political, and linguistic factors which shape the current situation. I then take this snapshot a step further by discussing ways in which universities and those who work within them can contribute to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, with a focus on linguists and departments of Linguistics.[1] It is shown that universities and non-Indigenous linguists can make valuable contributions to efforts of Indigenous Language Revitalization (ILR) in Canada, but that they must crucially recognize that Indigenous languages and the processes by which they are reclaimed, revitalized, and maintained, belong entirely to Indigenous people and Indigenous communities.

I write from my own perspective as a non-Indigenous researcher working from the Linguistics Department at McGill University, a large research institution located in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, which was founded and has been administered primarily by European settlers over the course of its nearly two-hundred-year history. The outlook and recommendations outlined here are thus primarily directed toward those who work within historically colonial institutions such like McGill. I recognize that post-secondary institutions come in all shapes and sizes, have distinct histories, and are the places of work and study for a diverse group of peoples, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Naturally, therefore, the roles and responsibilities of an Indigenous person working from a university might differ significantly from mine.

This paper is written primarily for those non-Indigenous people who, like me, have an interest in Indigenous languages and endangered languages more generally, and it is my hope that they might relate to and reflect fruitfully on the ideas presented here. At the same time, the information and recommendations provided here should be useful for a wider audience. I have heard time and again throughout the course of this research that a deeper understanding of the knowledges, perspectives, and concerns of Indigenous people is necessary not only for students, but for everyone in academia. University administrators at all levels, as well as faculty and staff of all ranks and in all departments, can and should learn and strive to become better allies to Indigenous peoples and their languages.

1.1 Origins of this research

This project grew out of McGill University's Symposium on the University's Role in Supporting Indigenous Languages (MSIL), held in May 2018, in which a diverse group of Indigenous language champions from across Canada came to McGill's campus and to the Mohawk community Kahnawá:ke, located just outside of Montreal, to share their expertise in the areas of language teaching, research, program development, and collaboration between universities and Indigenous communities, among others.[2] The lessons learned at this Symposium and during subsequent

[1] I follow Leonard (2017) in using the capitalized version of *Linguistics* to refer to the discipline and the lowercase version *linguistics* to refer to the kinds of work which encompasses the discipline.

[2] Here, I intend for the term 'Indigenous language champions' to be interpreted as 'champions of Indigenous languages' rather than 'Indigenous champions of language'. Hence, an Indigenous language champion in fact may or may not be Indigenous. In my view, an Indigenous language champion is anyone who actively advocates for the empowerment

knowledge-gathering activities are outlined in the Working Group's (2018) vision paper. The present paper constitutes an effort to expand on the ideas shared at the Symposium, to relate these to existing and ongoing scholarship in the field of Linguistics, and to offer thoughts on how these same lessons might help inform better research practices among the linguistics community.

McGill's Symposium was formed in response to the University's provostial Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education, which was convened in 2016 in an effort to develop "a clear and comprehensive reconciliation plan for McGill." The Task Force's (2017) Final Report includes the following call to action regarding language revitalization and documentation:

> *"The Task Force calls upon our University to develop a plan and strategy, prepared with educators, administrators, and elders in Indigenous communities, by which McGill's resources and expertise in the fields of linguistics, teaching accreditation, educational psychology, Indigenous Studies, and other fields can be marshaled to support Indigenous language revitalization in local Indigenous communities, particularly in the traditional territory on which McGill's campuses are located"*
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> **–McGill Provost's Task Force; Call to Action 34: p. 14**

The initiatives taken by McGill reflect a broader trend taking place across Canada, in which universities are working to understand and acknowledge the harmful role(s) they have played in the colonial enterprise, and to make their campuses and programs more welcoming to the knowledges, needs, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples. To this end, many universities in Canada besides McGill have also struck task forces which, in collaboration with Indigenous people on campus and in communities, have outlined the kinds of actions their respective institutions are prepared to take to ensure they carry out they responsibilities in reconciliation appropriately and effectively. Task forces at Queen's University (2017) and the University of Toronto (2017) were established in direct response to the 2015 Calls to Action of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (abbreviated 'TRC' – to be discussed in more detail in section 3). Similar undertakings are reflected in the strategic plans of the the University of Manitoba (2015-2020); the University of Regina (2015-2020); the University of Victoria (2017-2022); the University of Waterloo (2014-2019); among many others.

Although these task force reports and strategic plans include initiatives and strategies specific their respective universities, there are several common themes and goals expressed in nearly all of these documents. These include efforts to (i) develop and maintain a greater presence of Indigenous students, faculty, staff, and administrators on campus and to foster a better network of support for them; (ii) educate people in administrative and governance positions on Indigenous knowledge and perspectives; and (iii) increase programming and research regarding Indigenous concerns. Thus, the objectives of these universities are geared not only toward Indigenous peoples, but also toward non-Indigenous peoples. They intend to build the Indigenous presence on campus and to ensure that Indigenous voices are heard and, at the same time, they hope to complement these efforts by educating non-Indigenous people to become better allies. In the same vein, it is not only Indigenous peoples who stand to benefit from these endeavors. Universities and their non-

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and well-being of Indigenous peoples, whether or not this person is Indigenous. Several non-Indigenous participants at McGill's Symposium who have long advocated on behalf of Indigenous peoples and their languages fit this description, for instance.

Indigenous students, faculty, and staff, also have much to gain by learning about and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and conducting research into their approaches to scholarship. Doing so will create and foster a richer intellectual experience for all those working and studying at a university, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

A core objective of this paper is to lay out and elaborate upon the lessons taken from the fruitful discussion at the Symposium. Although much of the knowledge and advice provided by Symposium participants may have been meant for university administrators, it nonetheless conveys the type of transformation which must take place collectively throughout university campuses so that Indigenous languages gain proper and sustained support.

1.2 Roadmap

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 begins with some pertinent background, looking at several key terms relevant to the discussion at hand and addressing some of the most important factors at play in language endangerment and language revitalization. Section 3 then gives a historical overview of the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous languages in Canada. In particular, I examine in detail the system of Indian Residential Schools in Canada and how these institutions have shaped the current situation. Section 4 turns to the challenges faced by Indigenous people when undertaking projects of language reclamation and maintenance, as well as some of the innovative strategies which have been developed and implemented in Indigenous communities to tackle these obstacles. Section 5 discusses the ways linguists, departments of Linguistics, and universities in general can support Indigenous language revitalization. I focus here on the core takeaways from McGill's Symposium and other related activities in which Indigenous language champions have shared knowledge and wisdom on supporting Indigenous languages. Section 6 summarizes, offers some final thoughts, and concludes.

2. Preliminaries on language revitalization: Terminology and background

The purpose of this section is to set the stage for the rest of the paper by providing some necessary preliminary information on language revitalization. Section 2.1 looks at some of the key terminology surrounding the discourse on language documentation, reclamation, revitalization, and maintenance. Some of the terms examined here are used primarily in the Canadian context, such as terms used to describe particular groups of Indigenous people. Others are more broadly applicable to scholarship on language endangerment worldwide. With this terminology under our belt, section 2.2 provides some background regarding language endangerment and the importance of linguistic diversity.

2.1 Key terms in language revitalization in Canada (and beyond)

In this subsection I begin with the term *Indigenous* itself, as well as *First Nations*, *Inuit*, and *Métis*, which are used to describe groups of Indigenous people in Canada. What follows is the clarification of a number of terms related to language revitalization and related activities. Some

of these, including *language reclamation*, have been used to refer to distinct, but related undertakings in language work, and I hope to disambiguate these nuances. The reader is directed to Hinton et al. (2018:xxvi-xxvii) for helpful discussion.

Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit

Establishing and using terminology describing the descendants of people who originally inhabited the land now referred to as Canada is at once a complex, dynamic, contentious, and important undertaking. A number of organizations have commented on the history of this terminology, including the advantages, disadvantages, and connotations associated with certain terms. Useful resources on this subject include style guides produced by the Journalists for Human Rights, the International Journal of Indigenous Health, and the University of British Columbia. In this paper, I seek to follow the conventions outlined in these documents. Furthermore, in light of the importance of precision in using such terminology, I summarize the insights of these documents here.

The descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada are commonly understood to comprise three groups – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. These groups are collectively identified as 'Aboriginal Peoples' of Canada, as delineated in the Section 35 of the *Constitution Act* of 1982. I have chosen here to adopt the term *Indigenous*, rather than *Aboriginal*, to refer to this collective group. Note further that the plural form 'Indigenous Peoples' is intended to recognize that the original inhabitants of Canada include many distinct groups of people with diverse cultures, languages, traditions, and ways of life. The term *settler*, for its part, includes those who identify solely as descendants of Europeans who immigrated to the land we now call the Americas, as well as immigrants of other ethnic and geographic backgrounds. It does not include the descendants of peoples who did not come to the Americas by choice, and thus excludes, for instance, the descendants of slaves.

Inuit refers to the group of Indigenous people in Canada who have traditionally inhabited the far north of the country. The word 'Inuit' is a plural form meaning 'people' in the Inuktitut language, the language of the Inuit. This word is used alone – i.e. 'Inuit', as opposed to 'Inuit people' – to refer to the group of people who identify as Inuit.[3] The majority of Inuit live in Inuit Nunangat, which comprises four regions: Nunatsiavut (Labrador); Nunavik (Northern Quebec); Nunavut; and Inuvialut (NWT and Yukon). Note that Inuit live in settlements and communities, rather than reserves.

Métis – a French word meaning 'mixed' – is a term with a particularly complex history. Originally used to identify a specific group of people with mixed First Nations and European heritage, this word now "[applies] to multiple identities which have arisen from diverse historical instances of Aboriginal-European hertitage. (UBC First Nations Program 2009b:1)" Importantly, I use the term in this paper to refer to people who specifically identify as Métis, rather than as a cover-all for people with mixed Indigenous and European descent. Although Alberta is the only province with official Métis settlements, there are people who identify as Métis living all across Canada. There are also a number of organized groups of Métis people, including the national body known as the Métis Nation of Canada, which work to ensure that Métis rights are recognized and fulfilled

[3] The singular form of *Inuit* is *Inuk*, and the dual is *Inuuk*.

along with the rights of Inuit and First Nations. Note that like Inuit, Métis do not live on reserves, but rather in settlements and communities.

First Nations is used to refer to those Indigenous people in Canada who do not identify as Inuit or Métis. This term came into usage around 1980 as an alternative to 'Indian', though the latter still shows up in historical documents and legislation. I therefore follow the generally recommended convention of avoiding the term 'Indian', except when quoting such documents or referring to legal concepts where it is used. One such legal concept regards the *Indian Act* of 1876, which established a system in which a First Nations person may be legally recognized as 'Indian'. First Nations people who are registered under the *Indian Act* are 'Status Indians' and are allotted certain rights and benefits – for example, access to funds through a First Nations band, the ability to participate in band politics, and certain tax exemptions.[4] 'Non-Status Indians', on the other hand, are those who identify as First Nations but who are not registered as Indians and are therefore not afforded these same legal rights and benefits.

Although the *Indian Act* has been reformulated and modified since its original implementation in 1876, the arrangement by which First Nations people are divided into Status and Non-Status Indians remains problematic. First and foremost, this system is based on the paternalistic notion that Indigenous peoples need to be looked after and cared for like children. This is further reflected, for instance, in the fact that the federal government is the entity which conceived of and has the power to modify the criteria through which a First Nations person gains and maintains his or her status. These criteria, though currently being reexamined, are themselves not unproblematic. For instance, they typically privilege the bloodline of First Nations fathers over that of mothers, with First Nations women losing their status upon marrying a non-Indigenous or Non-Status First Nations man. Moreover, until the mid twentieth century, Status Indians would become 'enfranchised' – i.e. lose their status – upon receiving a university degree. Such regulations reflect the paternalistic nature and assimilatory aims of the system established under the *Indian Act*. At the same time, abandoning the system in its entirety would mean abandoning the duties and responsibilities of the Canadian government toward Indigenous peoples, as outlined in treaties established between First Nations peoples and the Crown.

The concepts behind the terms outlined here – and hence, the terms themselves – remain complex and dynamic topics, and I will not delve further into them in this section. For helpful summarizations of specific terms, concepts, and other key issues related to Indigenous peoples in Canada, I recommend the Indigenous Foundations platform developed at the University of British Columbia (https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/, accessed 3/30/19).

Colonialism and Decolonization

For the discussion in this paper I have found especially useful Leonard's (2018:56) conceptualization of *colonialism* as "practices of subjugation by socio-politically dominant groups or institutions (including academic disciplines) that assert and maintain control over the minds, bodies, and cultures of other groups, generally with an intent of exploiting them to benefit the dominant group." *Decolonization*, then, refers to the process of undoing these practices.

[4] Note that under current laws, however, having registered status under the *Indian Act* does not entail being a member in a First Nations band, nor does being a registered member in a band require Indian status through the federal government (UBC First Nations Program 2009a).

Importantly, in the context of academia, the process of decolonizing does not preclude Indigenous peoples from using Western tools in their endeavors, nor does it mean that any research done using Western tools necessarily flies in the face of Indigenous interests. Rather, a crucial point of decolonization is that Indigenous researchers make their own choices of what tools and approaches to use based on what is best suited for their goals, and that Indigenous methodologies are respected and valued as much as or more than Western methodologies. For a thorough discussion of issues of colonialism and decolonization in Linguistics, contextualized in past and ongoing language revitalization efforts, see Leonard & Haynes 2010; as well as Leonard 2007, 2011, 2012, 2018a.

Language Documentation and Language Revitalization

There is also some terminology surrounding the work linguists do with languages and their speakers that is important to clarify here. In my experience, several types of linguistic endeavors, including, but not limited to language documentation and description, are sometimes thought to be inextricably linked to language revitalization. In fact, the terms *language documentation* and *language revitalization* are perhaps something of a collocation for much of the linguistics community. While these activities often go hand-in-hand and can even mutually reinforce one another, it is incorrect and potentially problematic to think that language documentation and description inherently support and fuel efforts of language revitalization.

Documentation refers to the activity of preserving language through written, audio, or video material. *Revitalization*, on the other hand, involves strengthening the vitality of a language as a means of communication among a group of people. To be sure, documentation may support efforts of language revitalization, and in some cases may even be necessary for these efforts. But to document a language is not to revitalize a language, even in cases where a documentation project is community-based or community-driven (Benedicto 2019). In many if not most cases, language documentation ultimately benefits university-based linguists more than communities of speakers, as the end product is often not accessible to and/or of little use to the community (e.g., Leonard 2018b).

These issues are especially relevant with respect to Indigenous languages and Indigenous communities. Although Indigenous languages are quite well represented throughout the field of Linguistics, Indigenous peoples and their ideas are not. In the latter sections of this paper, I address this discrepancy and discuss some ways in which universities and individual scholars might work toward closing this gap and ensuring that there is a space in Linguistics for Indigenous people, not just for Indigenous languages. It is also important to note here that the lines between linguists and members of minority and endangered language communities are becoming increasingly blurred. More and more members of Indigenous communities are initiating and managing efforts to strengthen and maintain their languages, and more and more Indigenous people are using their knowledge and skills to make positive transformations in the field of Linguistics.

Language Reclamation and Language Revitalization

Distinctions are also being drawn among different types of activities related to language revitalization, and here I would like to clarify the distinction between two of these: *revitalization*

and *reclamation*. Again I draw from Leonard's ideas on this matter, which he has developed in large part through work with the Miami language spoken in Oklahoma.

Revitalization, on the one hand, refers to the process of strengthening a language by increasing the number of speakers, expanding and adding to the domains in which a language is spoken (e.g. at home; at work; in government; etc.), and promoting the intergenerational transmission of a language (Leonard 2011).

Reclamation is a bit more complicated to pin down. On the one hand, this term may refer to a specific type of language revitalization work, namely when few or no native speakers remain and heritage learners must literally 'reclaim' their languages from historical documents in which the language is preserved. For examples of such cases, see for instance Ash et al. 2001 and Feldman 2001 on the Wompanoag language (New England); Warner et al. 2006 on Mutsun (California); and Dorais et al. 2011 on Wendat (Quebec).

Increasingly, however, the term *language reclamation* is being used to capture the decolonizing goals of language work, including the restoration of the language's value among community members, the use of community-driven measures of success as opposed to those defined by the dominant society, and work which addresses the underlying causes of language shift (see e.g., Leonard 2007, 2018 for discussion). It is these aspects of language work with decolonizing aims which will be especially important to incorporate into academia, as current mainstream approaches still tend to privilege Western notions of knowledge and scholarship over Indigenous ones.

Informants, consultants, and beyond

The ongoing shift in approaches to linguists' work with Indigenous communities is also reflected in the terminology used for people who share their languages with linguists. Fieldwork in Linguistics has traditionally involved a scenario in which an academic linguist elicits words, phrases, and sentences from a native speaker. This scenario reflects the linguist-based framework outlined by Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) – to be discussed in greater detail in section 5.1 – in which the goals and priorities of the linguist take precedence. The native speaker in these situations has traditionally been referred to as an 'informant', a term which reflects the idea that the language-speaker merely provides the linguist with information, and the linguist does not seek out or use any meta-linguistic analysis from this person. Rice (2006:141) mentions that at one point in her training, she was encouraged to view an informant "like a machine – you put in a question and the machine spits back an answer." In reality, the exchange between the linguist and the native speaker is not likely to involve only translation, and the native speaker necessarily relies on his or her expertise throughout the process. In recognition of this, the term 'consultant' is often used nowadays as one which reflects a bit more the idea that the language-speaker is an expert and contributes more to the speaker-linguist relationship than machine-like translations.

However, even the term 'consultant' may not adequately or properly reflect the nature of the relationship between linguist and language-speaker, especially as these roles are increasingly blurred. There are thus two further terms suggested by Rice (2006) as being potentially more well suited to the realities of linguistic fieldwork and other kinds of work between linguists and Indigenous communities. The first of these is 'teacher', which captures the notion that a language-speaker attempts to transfer or convey his or her knowledge to the linguist, and that this

undoubtedly involves more than simple translation. Rice notes that all the speakers with whom she has worked have acted as teachers, even in those scenarios in which she –as the linguist – was the one who set the research agenda and priorities. The second term she suggests is 'collaborator', which more aptly reflects the kind of relationship taking place between native speakers and linguists working within the Collaborative Language Research Model advocated for by Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) – also to be discussed in section 5.1. The relationships between outsider linguists and Indigenous community members are constantly renegotiated, and terminology surrounding these relationships will likely continue to change to keep up.

2.2 Language endangerment, documentation, and revitalization: A broader view

We turn now to the current situation of language endangerment and language loss taking place throughout the world. Section 2.2.1 first provides relevant figures on the number of languages spoken throughout the world today, including the rate at which linguistic diversity is thought to be decreasing and the kinds of factors which drive this phenomenon. Importantly, language endangerment is part of a larger process of the diminishing biological diversity and weakening ecological wellbeing of our planet, and it is further linked to issues of human rights, inequality, and disparities in wealth. These issues are undoubtedly interconnected, and there is reason for linguists and non-linguists alike to strive to understand and counter current trends of language loss. Section 2.2.2 examines in more detail some of the specific reasons to value linguistic diversity and some of the benefits brought about through language reclamation and revitalization.

2.2.1 Language endangerment: Where are we and why?

Current estimates put the number of languages spoken in the world today somewhere in the range of six to seven thousand, give or take a few hundred. However, determining a precise number of existent languages is impractical for a few reasons, not least of which is the fact that distinguishing between languages and dialects is a notoriously imprecise science. Thus, in 1996 Michael Krauss estimated that there were six thousand spoken languages in the world, plus or minus ten percent (Krauss 1996:17). More recently, however, the *Ethnologue* (Lewis *et al.* 2009) sets this number considerably higher, at 7,111 (*ethnologue.com* accessed 3/20/19). The discrepancy between Krauss' figures and those of the *Ethnologue* almost certainly reflect differing methods for counting languages rather than an increase in linguistic diversity over these two decades.

Indeed, language diversity is decreasing at an alarming and unprecedented rate, as many speakers of minority languages are forgoing the use of their languages in favor of more dominant languages, a phenomenon which Fishman (1991) refers to as *language shift*. The large number of languages cited above may give us false hope regarding the safety of the world's linguistic diversity, as a considerable portion of these languages are spoken only by older generations and are no longer being passed on through intergenerational transmission. This has led a number of scholars to issue alarming predictions, including Krauss' (1992:7) warning that, given the current state of affairs and continuing decline in linguistic diversity, it is not unreasonable to think that "the coming century will see the death or doom of 90% of mankind's languages."

As Hale (1992:1) points out, language endangerment itself may not be a particularly upsetting issue for the masses, but it is a symptom of an ongoing process of decreasing biodiversity and increasing gaps in wealth and power. The factors which drive language shift are many, but they almost always involve a political, economic, or social imbalance of power among different ethnolinguistic groups. Moreover, the processes which result in language endangerment and death are themselves diverse. They may be physically violent in nature, as in the case of genocide and displacement of ethnic groups, or they may be the result of less violent but equally destructive means, such as forced assimilation through governmental policies or an influx of media in the language of the powerful or of the majority (Krauss 1992:6).

In many cases, as in that of the Indigenous languages of Canada (to be discussed in the following section), it is the compounding effects of these noxious factors which, taken together, can quickly place and maintain one or two languages and their speakers in a position of almost tyrannical linguistic authority. Importantly, while it may appear that minority groups are 'choosing' to abandon or diminish the use of their languages – because of the economic, social, or political impetus to switch to the language of the majority – the pressures to speak the dominant language tend to be so great that any semblance of choice is merely an illusion (Dorian 1993).

2.2.2 Why protect linguistic diversity?

A common and legitimate question regarding language endangerment is: who cares? Language change is a natural process, and the phenomenon of language shift has been happening for millennia as a byproduct of the military, political, and economic dominance of certain ethnolinguistic groups over others (Hale 1992). Perhaps a natural end result of our increased interconnectedness as a species is to have a single language spoken by all of mankind. There is reason to believe, however, that the current rate at which languages are disappearing is in fact not natural at all, but rather a result of the same manmade phenomena which have engendered and exacerbated an uneven distribution of wealth, the rapid depletion of natural resources, and the lack of fulfillment of basic human rights. Here I discuss how some of these same issues are linked to a decline in language diversity and why it is therefore so essential that efforts are made to preserve the world's languages.

Aesthetic value and cultural knowledge

Krauss (1996) provides an especially convincing argument as to why we should value the aesthetic aspect of language diversity. He likens language endangerment to the endangerment of biological species and concludes that "language is a supreme achievement of a uniquely human collective genius, as divine and endless a mystery as any living organism." The sheer aesthetic value of language diversity, he says, is important to humankind "in some very deep, non-trivial way (p. 18)." Indeed, many authors draw a comparison between the loss of linguistic diversity and the loss of biodiversity (e.g. Hale *et al.* 1992). And much like the depletion of the Earth's natural resources and biological species, language loss is likely to be irreversible unless significant measures are taken to ensure the preservation, strengthening, and maintenance of minority languages.

Languages are also a unique source of valuable and diverse cultural knowledge and 'adaptational ideas', including "ideas about transferring property (or even property itself), curing illness, acquiring food, raising children, distributing power, or settling disputes (Bernard 1992:82)." When a language dies, it carries with it a system of knowledge which, in many cases, has taken millennia to develop. Reyhner (1996:4-5) explains that "languages contain generations of wisdom, going back to antiquity," and for this reason many Indigenous people view language as an integral part of their cultural autonomy and wellbeing. Hence, upholding linguistic diversity preserves not only the priceless aesthetic value of individual languages, but also the intricate system of cultural knowledge and values which are inseparably tied to language.

Language and human rights

Language loss is also deeply connected to issues of human rights. The same political authorities which trample on the rights of Indigenous minorities through the appropriation of land, forced displacement, and other means, are often those which seek to stamp out the use of Indigenous languages while offering promises of social and economic progress. In its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), the United Nations General Assembly makes a number of references to the importance of Indigenous languages in the protection of human rights. Take, for instance, Article 13:

> 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop, and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.
>
> 2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that . . . Indigenous people can understand and be understood in political, legal, and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.
>
> **–UNDRIPS (2007):** ***Article 13***

The declaration also emphasizes the responsibility of states to work in conjunction with Indigenous peoples to guarantee that the right to use Indigenous languages is upheld across all domains. For instance, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that Indigenous people, if they so desire, have access to education delivered in their native languages, which is grounded in culturally appropriate ways of teaching and learning (Article 14), and, moreover, that they are able to "establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination. (Article 16)" Unfortunately, this declaration has no legal authority, and a number of political bodies have chosen either not to accept it as a guideline, or have accepted it only nominally. Nonetheless, the ideas expressed in this document provide a framework for any governing body committed to protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples, including their right to use and develop their languages. Within the Canadian context, the TRC (2015) endorses this document as a framework for reconciliation, but notes that the Canadian government has generally been reluctant to accept it as such.

Language and well-being

A further topic of growing interest in language revitalization research regards the kinds of health outcomes experienced by Indigenous people engaged in the reclamation, maintenance, and use of their languages. According to Walsh (2018), many Indigenous people have testified that language revitalization – in particular when it forms part of the broader process of decolonization – has led to positive changes in health and wellbeing. Statements from Indigenous people indicate that maintaining or reclaiming language is a crucial part of establishing, preserving, and being proud of their Indigenous identity. The activities surrounding language revitalization can also aid in the process of healing from historic and ongoing trauma stemming from colonialism (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1998). As Walsh also points out, however, such testimonies are generally not regarded as 'proof' that language use leads to positive health outcomes for Indigenous peoples, and there is a general lack of scholarship which seeks to establish a 'scientifc' link between the two.

Such studies do exist, however. McIvor et al. (2009) and Oster et al. (2014), for instance, have concluded that the use of Indigenous languages is correlated with lower rates of diabetes, and Walsh (2018:6) suggests that a similar correlation has been found with the use of Aboriginal languages in Australia. Other studies in Canada have shown that there is a correlation between Indigenous language use and reduced suicide rates among youth (Chandler & Lalonde 2008; Hallett *et al.* 2007). Hence, there is reason to be optimistic that language reclamation and maintenance can lead to positive health outcomes among Indigenous peoples, but there is clearly a need for more research on this topic.

Language and science

Finally, linguistic diversity is crucial to developing an accurate and robust understanding of the phenomenon of language and its connection to human cognitive capacities. Adequate theories of language must account for grammatical patterns found in all languages, not only those found in the world's most widely spoken languages. A single language has the power to support or to overturn various aspects of linguistic theory, and to expand our knowledge of what is possible in human language. Unfortunately, many of the world's six or seven thousand spoken languages are either inadequately described and understood, or underrepresented within the field of Linguistics, and often both. The idea that every language has something to contribute to our understanding of human language is an especially strong incentive for theoretical linguists to contribute to language documentation.

As discussed above, however, language documentation does not, by definition, contribute to efforts of language reclamation, revitalization, or maintenance. Given the time-sensitive nature of language endangerment and loss, some linguists have argued that it is a moral responsibility of professional linguists to contribute their skills to efforts of language revitalization (e.g. Hale et al. (1992); Czaykowska-Higgins (2009); among others; but see Ladefoged (1992) for a differing perspective). Debate on the moral imperatives of linguists when it comes to language endangerment is ongoing, and it involves linguists who are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and those who are both academy-based and community-based, among many other stakeholders.

Importantly, the title 'linguist' might lead some to believe that linguists are the authority on all language-related endeavors. In reality, however, many of the activities and undertakings which contribute to language reclamation and revitalization are beyond the purview of many linguists' knowledge and skill sets. This has led some scholars – e.g., Crippen & Robinson (2013) – to caution linguists against jumping too zealously into collaborating with Indigenous communities in language revitalization. These authors emphasize that "there is nothing inherently exploitative about solo research, just as collaborative research is not automatically ethical (p. 126)," and therefore, "it is entirely appropriate for the linguist to be the sole decider of the direction of research. (p. 127)" They defend the notion that linguists can work with speakers of endangered languages – in an ethically and morally upright manner – on projects whose sole goals are to advance linguistic theory, and which have no intentions of supporting language revitalization efforts. They argue that, without the proper circumstances and preparations, attempting to collaborate with Indigenous peoples on language revitalization projects can be counterproductive for all parties involved.

In a response to this article, Bowern & Warner (2015) stress that there are many ways for linguists to collaborate with communities of speakers, and that, at the very least, linguists should listen to the community's goals and seek to work toward those as well as their own. These are important issues, and the topic of collaboration among academic linguists and Indigenous communities is further addressed in Section 5. For useful discussion on the ethics of linguistic fieldwork, the reader is directed to Crippen & Robinson 2013 and Bowern & Warner 2015, and references cited therein.

3. Indigenous peoples and languages in Canada

The previous section looked at language endangerment with a relatively broad scope. In this section we turn to the history and current state of Indigenous languages and peoples in Canada, where centuries of oppressive policies toward Indigenous peoples have left us in a precarious state. This history is, of course, a vast, complex, and in some places, contentious topic, and in this paper I will only be able to scratch the surface. However, I believe the background provided here is not only indispensible in understanding the current state of affairs, but also must be taken into account when discussing and developing approaches to supporting Indigenous languages in Canada. Because relations between settlers and Aboriginal peoples in Canada are fraught with inequalities and injustices, many of which continue today, it is imperative that those who wish to aid in efforts of supporting Indigenous languages situate themselves within this history and locate their role moving forward.

Section 3.1 presents some of the census data on Indigenous peoples and languages in Canada. I include here an overview of the numbers and a discussion of the kinds of trends and developments they point to. I also include some thoughts on why such data, including how and by whom it is gathered, should be scrutinized. Section 3.2 looks at some of the relevant history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, focusing primarily on Indian Residential Schools and their detrimental effects. The section concludes with a discussion on why Indigenous languages are so important to reconciliation efforts in Canada.

3.1 What the numbers do (and don't) tell us

Information from censuses and academic research points to a number of important trends among the Aboriginal population of Canada.[5] First, the Aboriginal population in the country is growing rapidly. In the 2016 nationwide census in Canada, approximately 4.9% of respondents (1,673,785 total) identified as Aboriginal, up from 2.8% in 1996 and 3.8% in 2006. The total number of people who identified as Aboriginal grew by 42.5% in the ten-year period from 2006 to 2016, more than four times the rate of growth among the non-Aboriginal population. This rapid increase is due at least in part to natural population growth, but it is also indicative of a growing number of people who are now choosing to identify as Indigenous but did not do so previously (Statistics Canada 2017).

A second, encouraging trend is that many Indigenous people – whether or not they have an Indigenous language as a mother tongue – are choosing to learn an Indigenous language as a second language. Responses from the 2016 census indicate that while only 12.5% of those who identified as Aboriginal reported having an Indigenous language as a mother tongue, a greater number (15.6%) reported being able to speak an Indigenous language. Importantly, these figures include those Indigenous people who live both within and outside Indigenous communities. According to the same census, 51.8% of the Aboriginal population was living in metropolitan centres of greater than 30,000 people. Therefore, support for Indigenous languages in Canada is needed not just in Indigenous communities, but also in urban centres where a significant proportion of the people now resides.

With regard to the number of Indigenous languages, most sources point to about seventy (Rice 2008; Statistics Canada 2017), with the number varying along with differing thoughts on what counts as a language and what counts as a dialect. Indigenous languages in Canada vary greatly with respect to their vitality, and the most recent census data indicates that approximately forty of the Indigenous languages spoken in Canada have fewer than 500 speakers. The most widely spoken Indigenous languages include the Cree dialects with around 80,000 speakers, and Inuktitut with around 40,000 speakers. In the province of Quebec, 182,885 people – 2.24% of the total population – identified as Indigenous, of which 40,190, or 22% of all Indigenous people in Quebec, reported speaking an Aboriginal language at home most often. The largest groups who reported speaking an Aboriginal language most often at home in Quebec were Cree-Montagnais (28,110) and Inuit (11,375) (Statistics Canada 2017).

A cautionary note on using numbers to understand Indigenous languages

Having provided the numerical overview above, I would like to discuss some of the potential shortcomings of such data. Most importantly, practices of delineating, counting, and mapping Indigenous languages are methods traditionally used by non-Indigenous people to understand Indigenous people on Western terms. These practices may not reflect the way Indigenous peoples' approaches to understanding themselves or the world around them, and may not be an accurate or helpful way to understand the current situation (Moore *et al.* 2010).

[5] Statistics Canada uses the term 'Aboriginal' to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in Canada. This is in line with the use of the same term in the *Constitution Act* of 1982, and I will follow this convention when discussing census data in this section.

In addition, binding Indigenous languages to specific, often non-overlapping geographic areas on a map fails to capture two important realities. First, many speakers of Indigenous languages have moved away from areas where their languages were traditionally spoken, and sizeable communities now exist in different parts of the country (in many cases across international borders). And second, the geographic areas which correspond to the use of particular languages have historically not been static, but have overlapped and transformed in complex ways over time, reflecting migrations as well as interethnic and interlinguistic interactions among Indigenous people.

Crucially, Western approaches which understand languages to exist separately from their speakers may not be illegitimate or even unhelpful. What is problematic is that it is almost always non-Indigenous people who make the decisions regarding what counts as a language, a speaker, and a domain, and that such decisions are made without consulting the speakers of a language or considering that this approach may have drawbacks (Moore et al. 2010). Moreover this may also give rise to and perpetuate issues of group membership, legitimacy, and identity among Indigenous peoples. The following subsection seeks to fill in some of the gaps of the numbers by providing some history of Indigenous languages in Canada.

3.2 Indigenous languages: How did we get here?

Arguably the most important factor behind the decline in vitality of Indigenous languages in Canada has been the conviction, among non-Indigenous people, that Indigenous languages and cultures are inherently inferior to those of Europe, and that their mere existence is a roadblock on the path of the nation's progress. It is this mindset that is behind the deceitful and harmful ways in which settlers have interacted with Indigenous peoples. It is apparent, for instance, in the lack of adherence to treaties, in the child welfare system which removes Indigenous children from their families and communities, and in the general lack of knowledge and understanding of Indigenous peoples on the part of settlers. I focus here on one particularly destructive instantiation of this mindset – Indian Residential Schools (IRS).

3.2.1 Indian Residential Schools: Background[6]

Indian Residential Schools are institutions which sought to inculcate Indigenous children with European knowledge and religion, while stripping them of their Indigenous languages, cultures, and values. According to the TRC (2015), these schools constitute a federally funded assimilatory system with aims to eradicate Indigenous languages and cultures by removing Indigenous children from their families. They were a direct and unabashed assault on Indigenous languages, cultures, religions, spiritualities, and identities. The last of these schools did not close until the 1990's, and they are therefore very much a part of the modern history of Canada. In order to fulfill the 'Truth' component of Truth and Reconciliation, it is imperative that the history of Indian Residential

[6] The information in this section was gleaned primarily from the (2015) Final Report of the TRC, and the reader is directed to this and other publications the TRC for a comprehensive overview of the history of betrayal and injustices as told by Indigenous people themselves.

Schools be revealed, reflected upon, and understood – not only by the perpetrators and their descendants, but also by Indigenous Survirors of IRS and their families. [7]

To aid in this process, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established in 2005 as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, a class action lawsuit which provided compensation to victims of IRS and their families. The TRC, for its part, has the goal of "contributing to truth, healing, and reconciliation" by providing a "holistic, culturally appropriate, and safe setting" for Survivors of Indian Residential Schools to share their stories. The Commission further seeks to "promote awareness and public education of Canadians about the IRS system and its impacts. (TRC 2015: 339-340)" To this end, its members spent several years traveling across the country, providing a platform and a safe space for IRS Survivors to come forward with their stories. The Commission also heard from former administrators and teachers of IRS, and conducted extensive research through the examination historical documents, many of which were only reluctantly handed over by religious and governmental bodies. Although the mandate of the TRC is centered around Indian Residential Schools, much of the information provided in its publications addresses the lasting impacts of these institutions and other ongoing issues relevant to the revitalization of Indigenous languages and other aspects of reconciliation. In what follows, I look in more detail at the history and impacts of IRS, as outlined in the (2015) Final Report of the TRC.

Indian Residential Schools: The history

The prototype of the Indian Residential School existed at least two hundred years before Canada gained its independence as a country. The first such residential school was established in the 17th century near Quebec City, and although this and other initial efforts often failed, it is clear that a general attitude of superiority and disdain for Indigenous cultures existed among the white settler population from their arrival.

Starting in the mid-19th century, the concept of the Indian Residential School saw more and more success. At first, virtually all of these institutions were founded and administered by various sects of the Christian church, especially Roman Catholics. But upon Canada's independence in 1867, the Canadian government began to increase its involvement and support for Indian Residential Schools, apparently motivated by the notion that taming, controlling, and profiting from this vast territory meant doing the same to the people who inhabited it. In 1883, the government established three large Residential Schools in Western Canada, and by 1930 – when IRS reached their heyday – there were eighty such schools in operation all across the nation.

Despite the purported support of the government, these institutions never gained the financial, material, or logistical provisions necessary to provide students with a quality education of any kind. Most Indian Residential Schools were hopelessly underfunded and staffed by teachers and administrators who were underqualified and underpaid. Schools typically did not have the resources to ensure that the facilities were well maintained while students received a full-time education. Many schools resorted to a half-day system, in which students spent a significant portion of their days contributing to the upkeep of the school, often through manual labor. Even with the contribution of student labor, however, conditions remained precarious at most schools.

[7] I follow the convention used in the publications of the TRC of capitalizing the term 'Survivor' when referring to those Indigenous people who lived through the experience of Indian Residential Schools.

In the end, many Indigenous children who attended IRS were not only robbed of the chance to speak their Indigenous language, be immersed in their culture, or learn the ways of life of their communities; they were not given a real chance to succeed in the society of the colonizers.

The lack of funding and inadequate staffing of IRS not only led to conditions which were not conducive to learning and growth, but also put students' emotional, mental, and physical well-being in danger. Poor building infrastructure led to crowded, unsanitary, and poorly ventilated dormitories in which disease – especially tuberculosis – spread rampantly. While it is certain that Indigenous students at IRS died at far greater rates than children of the general population, death records at IRS were poorly kept and in many cases have been destroyed. Moreover, although the government recognized the severity of the health conditions for Indigenous children at Indian Residential Schools, the TRC has concluded that "by failing to take adequate measures that had been recommended to it, the federal government blighted the health of generations of Aboriginal people. (TRC 2015: 99)"

In addition to disease, Indigenous children at IRS were also highly susceptible to physical and sexual abuse, both by their peers and by IRS staff. The lack of funding and organization at these schools led to chaotic situations in which children were often left unsupervised and staff were seldom held accountable for their actions. The TRC's Final Report indicates that allegations of abuse were rarely investigated and, even when they were, school officials accused of abuse were often allowed some recourse to protect themselves from punishment. In general, the report concludes, "Indian Affairs and the churches placed their own interests ahead of the children in their care and then covered up that victimization. It was cowardly behaviour. (TRC 2015: 105)" New cases of abuse are still being brought to light, even to this day, and Survivors of IRS who were also victims of physical and/or sexual abuse at the schools continue to deal with the psychological trauma of these experiences.

The TRC further concludes that these schools were the centerpiece to the Canadian government's Aboriginal policy, the goals of which were "to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. (TRC 2015: 1)" These goals were considered justified in order to rescue Indigenous peoples from their 'backwards' ways and to assimilate them completely into Canadian society. This amounts to nothing less than genocide, as defined by the (1948) *United Nations International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Article 2 of this convention includes five definitions of genocide, two of which clearly indicate that the actions of the Canadian government toward Indigenous people in Canada should be considered genocide:

> *Definition (b)*: Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
> *Definition (c)*: Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group
> **See: http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html**

Although Indian Residential Schools eventually met their demise, their detrimental effects on the well-being of Indigenous people are still felt strongly today, and their legacy lives on through negative attitudes and inadequate policies which fail to respect the rights and meet the needs of Indigenous peoples. It is of utmost importance that all Canadians – not only Indigenous people – work to understand and heal from this history in order to move forward on the path of reconciliation.

3.2.2 Indian Residential Schools and Indigenous languages

The system of Indian Residential Schools had a profoundly detrimental effect on the vitality of nearly all Indigenous languages spoken in Canada. Survivors of IRS tell stories of the punishment Aboriginal students would receive for, in the words of school officials, 'speaking Indian' (TRC 2015:81). Penalties for speaking an Indigenous language ranged from forced haircuts to whacks on the hand or the mouth with a ruler and more severe corporal punishment. Although many children continued to speak their languages in secret, the cumulative result was that Aboriginal children came to view speaking their native language as a serious offense. In many cases, children who attended a Residential School found it difficult to communicate with their parents upon seeing them again:

> *"I had tried to talk to my parents and, no, it didn't work…. We were well anyway because I knew that they were my parents, when I left the residential school, but the communication wasn't there."*
>
> **–John Kistabish, Survivor of the Residential School at Amos, QC**
> **TRC (2015):83**

Many Survivors came to experience strong negative emotions toward their native language and even toward their parents:

> *"And one of the things that residential school did for me, I really regret, is that it made me ashamed of who I was…. And I wanted to be white so bad, and the worst thing I ever did was I was ashamed of my mother, that hounourable woman, because she couldn't speak English."*
>
> **–Agnes Mills, Survivor of All Saints Residential School in Saskatchewan**
> **TRC (2015):154**

Many parents, in turn, decided to forgo speaking to their children in an Indigenous language in favor of English or French, and hence intergenerational transmission of linguistic, cultural, spiritual, and other types of knowledge was often irreparably broken.

Nowadays, Survivors of IRS and other Indigenous language champions emphasize the crucial role of Indigenous languages in the process of reconciliation. A number of Indigenous authoritative bodies have weighed in on this matter. For instance, the Assembly of First Nations (1994) states that for many First Nations Elders, "knowing or learning the native language is basic to any deep understanding of a First Nation way of life . . . a First Nation world is quite simply not possible without its own language." The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, for its part, calls Aboriginal languages a "tangible emblem of group identity" which offers "the individual a sense of security and continuity with the past". The intimate link between language and reconciliation is perhaps best expressed through the words of Survivors of Indian Residential Schools. Reflecting on the significance of learning her language, one intergenerational Survivor remarks:

> *"[I]t's family connections, it's oral history, it's traditions, it's ways of being, it's ways of knowing, it's medicine, it's song, it's dance, it's memory. It's everything, including the land . . . And unless we inspire our kids to love our culture, to love our language, our languages are continually going to be eroded over time . . . So, to me that's part of what reconciliation looks like."*
>
> **–Sabrina Williams; TRC 2015:157**

Another intergenerational Survivor remarks on the responsibility of all Canadians to engage with the Indigenous language(s) of their region:

> *"I'll know that reconciliation is happening in Canadian society when Canadians, wherever they live, are able to say the names of the tribes with which they're neighbours; they're able to pronounce the names of the community, or of people that they know, and they're able to say hello, goodbye, in the language of their neighbours."*
>
> **–Victoria Wells; TRC 2015:307-308**

These perspectives indicate clearly that the responsibility of lifting up Indigenous languages does not lie solely with Indigenous peoples. While it is Indigenous people who must lead this process, non-Indigenous people have a responsibility to ensure that language work is not done in vain, and that Indigenous languages gain and maintain the status they deserve in all levels of Canadian society. With this same conviction, the TRC's (2015) Final Report includes five calls to action directly related to Indigenous languages (pp. 328-329). The following two principles outlined in these calls to action reflect the kind of attitude and approach which must be taken:

i. *Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them.*
(Call to Action 14.i; p. 328)

ii. *The preservation revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.*
(Call to Action 14.iv; p. 328)

Moreover, the report includes the following call to action directed toward institutions of higher education:

> *We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.*
>
> **(Call to Action 16; p. 329)**

I conclude this section on a celebratory note. Despite the atrocities of Indian Residential Schools and other destructive facets of Canada's Aboriginal policy, Indigenous peoples are very much alive and very much present throughout Canada, and this is a reason to rejoice. We still have the opportunity to come to terms with the past, address and redress the damages, and create a future in which all of us benefit from the cultures, knowledges, and wisdom of Indigenous peoples. We still have the opportunity to be allies to Indigenous people and to learn together. The final two sections of the paper focus on ways this can happen through education and collaboration at

universities and between universities and Indigenous people and communities. Section 4 looks at some of the challenges faced in Indigenous language revitalization and reclamation in the Canadian context, and Section 5 looks at the ways universities can be allies to Indigenous communities in addressing and overcoming these challenges.

4. Challenges and strategies in Indigenous language reclamation

As we saw in the previous section, Indigenous people in Canada have pointed to the crucial role both education and language must play in language reclamation and maintenance, a notion which is also expressed in the literature on Indigenous language revitalization (e.g., McCarty 2003; Poetsch & Lowe 2010). At the same time, given the complex history which has led to the need for the revitalization of Indigenous languages in Canada and other colonized lands, there are a number of challenges faced by those involved in this process. This section examines some of the challenges and strategies surrounding Indigenous language revitalization and maintenance. These are relevant not only in Canada, but also in the United States, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Central and South America where the legacy of colonization remains.

Section 4.1 looks at three separate but related challenges commonly faced by Indigenous communities engaged in language revitalization: : (i) building aspects of decolonization into language learning and language programming; (ii) creating effective programming for languages with little or no existing resources or teaching materials; and (iii) responding to the growing need for *adult* language-learning programs. Section 4.2 then turns to some of the ways Indigenous communities, language champions, and scholars are surmounting these obstacles through creative solutions.

4.1 Challenges in Indigenous language revitalization

Though some might be tempted to lump them into a single category of language pedagogy, the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages is often quite different from that of major world languages like English, French, Mandarin Chinese, etc. First, the two endeavors generally involve a different set of goals. Major world languages enjoy prestige as international means of conducting education, commerce, and politics, and these languages are commonly learned precisely because they open up a variety of professional opportunities. Indigenous languages, on the other hand, do not typically enjoy international (or intranational) prestige, and those who learn them are often seeking to restore the value and prestige of their languages. Indigenous people generally accept this additional responsibility of ensuring the survival of their language, culture, and ways of life in the face of colonization and additional forms of oppression. This is, of course, an onus which does not fall to learners of major world languages. This subsection looks at some of the particular challenges faced by Indigenous people in language revitalization.

4.1.1 Incorporating decolonization into language learning

Indigenous languages generally do not enjoy the privilege of widespread use, and strengthening them often necessitates reclaiming domains for using the language. A domain may be a physical

space (e.g., at home; in school; etc.) or a figurative space (e.g., when speaking with grandparents; when conducting ceremonies; etc.). Adding to and expanding domains for use of Indigenous languages is an important aspect of decolonization (recall that language revitalization work which includes components of decolonization has been called *language reclamation*). Language reclamation efforts necessarily involve undoing centuries of work on the part of colonial enterprises to devalue Indigenous languages. This burden adds extra layers of mentally and emotionally demanding work to the language learning process.

Reclaiming areas where the language is valued as a viable means for communication is not an easy task. Communities engaged in this kind of work must establish autonomy over their culture and language, where control has been attacked and appropriated by Westerners who call themselves experts on these topics. In reality, of course, it is Indigenous communities, rather than outsiders, who have the right to define for themselves what counts as language, who counts as a speaker, how and whether to measure proficiency, and how to evaluate the overall success of a community's language work. However, these are all aspects of the discourse on language endangerment and language revitalization which are, by and large, still controlled by Western-oriented scholars (e.g., Moore et al. 2010). If we are to be successful in reconciliation, however, Indigenous people must have the autonomy to make these decisions for themselves.

With these things in mind, it is especially important that Indigenous language revitalization programs belong in full to their respective communities (e.g., Hinton 2011; McCarty 2008; McGregor et al. 2016; Poetsch & Lowe 2010). Communities who have control over their language programs can ensure that they respond directly to the desires and needs of the community and are not bound by definitions and measures of success established by outsiders. According to Haynes et al. (2010), for instance, the ways in which a particular language community evaluates the success of language revitalization (e.g., through speaker proficiency) should be community-driven, based on the local culture, and adapted to a wide ranger of learners and contexts.[8] In this way, Indigenous communities can respond to the reality that language revitalization often involves people of all ages learning the language through in a variety of environments. See Sarkar et al. 2013 for an example of a language program taking place with a Mi'gmaq community in Quebec for which assessment tools are being adapted in accordance with the culture and needs of the community.

Moreover, if a significant portion of language revitalization is to take place through school-based programs, then another challenge regarding decolonization is how to instill Indigenous values and ways of knowing into these largely Western institutions (see Hermes 2007 and references therein). Whereas Western methods for teaching language often involve removing and studying the grammar of the language apart from the culture and traditions of the people who speak it, for many Indigenous peoples language is something that is deeply and inextricably connected to culture, values, and ways of knowing (Czaykowska-Higgins et al. 2017), and to remove it from this context would be to depart from an Indigenous way of knowing. By incorporating aspects of culture into methods of language training at schools, communities can be sure that the language is not removed

[8] As explained by Leonard (2018a), the point of decolonization is not necessarily to shun all Western approaches to language work, but rather to ensure that Indigenous scholars and communities are able to choose among Indigenous and Western methods, where both types of methods are valued on a level playing field. In some cases, Indigenous language champions may find certain Western-based methods to be best suited for their goals. For instance, the Onkwawén:na Kentyókhwa Mohawk Immersion School at Six Nations of the Grand River in Ontario – a program which has been quite successful in producing fluent second language speakers of Mohawk – uses the proficiency scale of the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale as part of its strategy for assessing students (Green & Maracle 2018).

from these important aspects of its existence, and that valuable cultural knowledge is strengthened alongside the language.

4.1.2 Language programming with a lack of resources

A challenge related to the lack of domains for using Indigenous languages regards the relative dearth of resources on these languages. While learners of international world languages often take for granted the abundance of didactic resources, learners of Indigenous languages are not so lucky. Due to the decline in their use and perceived value among speakers and communities, creating resources for learning these languages has generally not been a priority. Hence, in many cases, it falls upon teachers of Indigenous languages to design and create their own didactic materials (e.g., McIvor 2015; Czaykowska-Higgins *et al* 2017). An invitee to McGill's Symposium on Indigenous Languages also spoke to this particular challenge and the successes of her community in addressing it:

> *"People have been lied to for so many years, so they didn't see the value of the language. They put more value in English or French. They paid their English or French teachers more than they paid the [Indigenous language] teachers. They provided more resources to them, and more resources were available to them. But for us, as we teach the language, we have to, at the same time, develop what we need. We didn't have our dictionaries in place; we didn't have our grammar books in place; we didn't have our images in place; we didn't have recordings in place; so we had to develop these resources as we went along. But in the last two years we have compiled a lot of information that we now can pass along to first-year teachers."*
>
> **–MSIL Invitee, May 2018**

In addition to a lack of written sources on language and a lack of physical teaching aides such as textbooks, Indigenous communities often struggle to find personnel who are both proficient in the language and qualified to teach. A community may rely heavily on just a few remaining speakers, often Elders or older speakers, to pass on the language. However, these speakers may not have training or experience in teaching, and therefore may be put in the awkward position of being pressured to do something they are not qualified for (McIvor 2015).

Fortunately, Indigenous communities have often responded to these challenges creatively and successfully. Some of the most cutting-edge practices for language acquisition have been developed in Indigenous communities (Hinton 2011; see Hinton et al. 2018 for an overview). By developing their own materials, Indigenous communities can accomplish two important tasks at once. First, they can ensure that the relevant cultural knowledge is infused in language learning; and second, they can take control of the process of reclaiming cultural and linguistic autonomy, an important part of decolonization and reconciliation.

4.1.3 Indigenous language programming for adults

While children have typically been the target of language revitalization programs, Indigenous communities are realizing that school-based programs, especially those in which children have only a few contact hours per week with the language, are not enough to revitalize their languages (e.g., Blair et al. 2002; Gardner 2004). At the same time, communities are recognizing the important role adults, especially those at child-bearing age and with young children, have to play in the language revitalization process (Hinton et al. 2018). Adults with children have the opportunity to speak the language to their children in the home and thereby create new native speakers of the language. Nonetheless, teaching Indigenous languages to adults brings a whole new set of challenges to contend with.

The first of these challenges is, quite simply, that language-learning is hard for adults. They cannot count on the brain plasticity of children and may feel more hesitant to speak for fear of making mistakes. Most adults must put in thousands of hours of contact with a language in order to achieve proficiency (Maracle & Green 2018; McIvor 2015), especially when the grammar and phonology of the target language is significantly different from their first language, as is the case for many learners of Indigenous languages. Thousands of hours of time to invest in language learning is, of course, is a luxury that most adults do not have. Adult learners of Indigenous languages – whether or not they live in an Indigenous community – have significant personal and professional commitments and find it difficult to invest the amount of time needed to become proficient speakers.

In addition, the enterprise of adult Indigenous Second Language Learning (ISLL) is relatively new, and there is a shortage of research on this topic. Most existing studies describe and reflect on Indigenous language programs geared toward adults rather than summarizing and critically assessing effective strategies (McIvor 2015). Conducting research on Indigenous language learning is an area in which universities can play an important role. Major universities tend to have the financial and human resources to carry out extensive studies, as well as the academic and political clout to legitimize and disseminate the results. This and other ways in which universities can support Indigenous peoples in reclaiming and revitalizing their languages is the topic of section 5. But first, in section 4.2, I point to a number of ways in which Indigenous peoples have successfully met the challenges of language reclamation.

4.2 Strategies and successes in Indigenous language reclamation and revitalization

The challenges outlined above constitute barriers to language learning and revitalization encountered by a number of Indigenous communities not only in Canada, but throughout the colonized world. Fortunately, Indigenous peoples all over have stood up to these challenges and met them with innovative solutions. This subsection outlines several of the methods developed and used among Indigenous communities.

4.2.1 The Master-Apprentice Method

The Master-Apprentice Method (MAP; Hinton et al. 2002; Hinton et al. 2018) was developed by Indigenous peoples in California and involves pairing a fluent speaker (the ‘master’) with a learner

(the 'apprentice') for language immersion grounded in practical, often culturally centered activities. In this method, as it was originally conceived, the fluent speaker and learner spend a significant amount of time together – ideally twenty hours per week or more – and use only the target language. Importantly, the master and the apprentice often use the language while engaging in activities which carry some cultural significance for the language community in question (e.g. berry-picking or canoe-building in British Columbia). Hence, this method is conducive to settings in which language-learning is not separated from culture, but rather the two go hand-in-hand and reinforce one another. According to Hinton et al. (2018), MAP has also seen successful learning outcomes for adults and has often created a greater sense of community around the language, with both masters and apprentices using the language with more people in more domains. Since its conception in the 1990s, it has been adopted by a number of Indigenous communities around the world – in Oklahoma, British Columbia, Canada, etc. – who have often modified it to address their specific needs and challenges.

4.2.2 Language nests

Language nests were originally conceived of and implemented as daycare-like environments where preschool-aged children would be immersed in a language through meaningful interaction with proficient speakers. The concept has its origins in the early 1980's and was developed as a part of the Maori language revitalization movement of New Zealand (King 2001), and the name comes from the Maori term *Te Kōhanga Reo* (lit. 'the nest language'). Development of language nests stems from two observations on the part of Maori language champions: first, that most proficient speakers were over the age of forty, and second, that children have the easiest time acquiring the language (King 2001:121). Since their inception in New Zealand, language nests have become an important component of language revitalization efforts in other parts of the world, including Canada and the United States – for instance, in Hawai'i (Wilson & Kamanā 2001); the Pacific Northwest of the United States (Zahir 2018); and British Columbia (e.g., Chambers 2014; McIvor & Parker 2016; Parker *et al* 2014).

Importantly, language nests are a tool which can readily aid in the decolonization aspects of language revitalization by reclaiming and establishing domains in which the language is to be used. Moreover, Zahir (2018:161-163) points out that those working within language nests can proceed at their own pace by reclaiming domains one at a time (e.g., by reclaiming one room of a building at a time, or even by reclaiming one sound of the language at a time). He further notes that language nests allow learners to proceed at their own pace by reclaiming domains one at a time (e.g., by reclaiming one room of a building at a time, or even by reclaiming one sound of the language at a time). Moreover, McIvor & Parker (2016:25) emphasize that language nests should ideally be a starting point from which language proficiency increases in both children and adults, and from which its use spreads into other areas of life beyond the nest itself. Language nests are therefore a way Indigenous communities can establish and maintain control over their language revitalization efforts by simultaneously building language proficiency and extending language use through an increasing number of domains.

4.2.3 School-based immersion

In addition to innovative approaches developed outside schools, a number of Indigenous groups have created successful language revitalization programs through **school-based immersion**. An example of just how robustly language can be used within the education system comes from Hawai‘i. Hawaiian language champions and educators have pushed for the language not only to be taught as a school subject, but to be used as the medium of instruction at all levels of education. On the Big Island of Hawai‘i, for example, the encouraging results of language nests spurred the creation of a P-12 immersion school – Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u – supported by the Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani Hawaiian Language College at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo (Wilson & Kamanā 2001). The university, for its part, offers teaching certificates and higher-education degrees – Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Ph.D. – all delivered in Hawaiian. Students have options to focus their studies on a variety of topics related to the Hawaiian langauge, from Hawaiian history, culture, and literature, to teaching the Hawaiian language and strategies and issues in language revitalization (Wilson 2018). The use of Hawaiian as a medium of instruction from primary through tertiary education ensures that the language maintains its health and relevance in a variety of domains. Moreover, many graduates the P-12 immersion school either return to the school as instructors and administrators or send their children to the school (or both), a trend which helps to foster the intergenerational transmission and use of Hawaiian both at school and in the home.

At the McGill Symposium, we heard from representatives of successful immersion programs taking place closer to home with the Kanyen’kehá:ka’ (Mohawk) language. Mohawk communities have accomplished considerable language reclamation feats in the past thirty years. According to Mohawk language champions Tehota’kerá:tonh Jeremy Green and Owennat´kha Brian Maracle (2018), in 1994 there were only 74 elderly first-language speakers of Mohawk at Six Nations of the Grand River in Ohsweken, Ontario. In the past few decades, however, immersion programs have aided in developing 50 fluent second-language speakers and 10 first-language speakers of Mohawk at Six Nations alone (Green & Maracle 2018:149). Similar reclamation and revitalization effrorts are taking place in other Mohawk communities (see Maracle 2002 for an overview) and other Haudenosaunee communities (e.g. Seneca – Nephew et al. 2019).

4.2.4 Other approaches

Mohawk speakers have also been prolific in developing groundbreaking language acquisition and revitalization methods, including the **Root-Word Method** (Green & Maracle 2018). While the Master-Apprentice method, school-based immersion, and language nest concept are all adaptable for the revitalization of specific Indigenous languages regardless of their grammatical structure, this method is tailored specifically to facilitate the documentation, teaching, and learning of polysynthetic languages. Developed originally by Mohawk-speaker David ‘Kanatawákhon’ Maracle in 1980s at the University of Western Ontario, the Root-Word Method has been used in adult immersion programs in other Mohawk communities and in the revitalization of other Iriquoian languages in both Canada and the United States (Green & Maracle 2018).

The methods discussed in this section are but a fraction of the the pedagogical and strategic methods used in the reclamation and revitalization of Indigenous languages. Others include **Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA)** (Greymorning 2001; 2005); **Where are Your Keys?** (Gardner & Ciotti 2018); **Focus-on-Form** (Nassaji 2000); **Total Physical Response**

(TPR) (Asher 2009); and **Task-based Learning** (Nunan 1989). The reader is directed to Hinton & Hale 2001 and Hinton *et al* 2018 for an overview of the diverse issues and approaches to language revitalization.

While a more thorough overview of the methods listed above is beyond the scope of this paper, the creativity and resourcefulness of Indigenous language champions should be apparent. An important point to be elaborated upon in the following section is that Indigenous peoples and communities are already working with diligence and success to reclaim and maintain the health of their languages, and they often do so without any kind of support from outside people or organizations. Hence, it is not the place or responsibility of outsider linguists or universities to determine how Indigenous language revitalization should proceed. Rather, their responsibility is to strive to be good allies and to follow the lead of Indigenous communities in their efforts. The following section discusses some specific ways linguists, departments of Linguistics, and universities can do this.

5. Universities, Linguistics, and Indigenous revitalization efforts

At this point we have set the stage for examining how universities and linguists can engage with Indigenous peoples in language revitalization and reclamation in Canada. We have seen that assimilatory and destructive governmental policies, as well as the dishonest and double-crossing behaviors of colonial settlers, have contributed greatly to the precarious current situation of Indigenous language endangerment in Canada. The challenges of language revitalization in Canada, then, amount to more than just a lack of speakers and a lack of linguistic and pedagogical resources. The harshest challenges lie in the lasting psychological effects, among Indigenous peoples, of centuries of brainwashing by colonizers who wished to make their languages and cultures disappear. They lie also in the dangerous attitudes of the dominant group with respect to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous languages, whether these attitudes be racist, apathetic, or paternalistic in nature.

This is the context in which language revitalization is taking place in Canada today. Universities and those who work for them, including linguists, work within this context whether they choose to recognize it or not, and whether their work is directly related to Indigenous peoples or not. If they do not recognize this setting and act accordingly, they miss an opportunity to fulfill their responsibilities in achieving the goals of truth, healing, and reconciliation.

Despite the significant setbacks discussed above, there is hope. We have seen that language reclamation efforts, in particular, not only strengthen the vitality Indigenous languages, but also contribute to efforts of decolonization by responding to historical and contemporary events and ideologies, and by returning linguistic and cultural authority and autonomy to Indigenous peoples. In this section I discuss how universities and those working within them, including linguists, can play an important role in supporting Indigenous peoples in these efforts. Section 5.1 examines the kinds of contributions universities and individual linguists can make off-campus, and section 5.2 discusses the kinds of activities which can take place on campus.

5.1 Off-campus: Research methodologies, relationships, and programming

It is important to note that many of the responsibilities universities have in Indigenous Language Revitalization necessarily take place away from university campuses. This reflects the fact that language-revitalization is an Indigenous-led process, and the bulk of work in this process must take place in Indigenous communities. Here, I begin in section 5.1.1 by looking at the kinds of research and collaborative frameworks which have been used by academics in carrying out work in Indigenous communities. I follow other scholars in suggesting that frameworks which place authority over projects in the hands of Indigenous people and communities are generally most appropriate in the Canadian context. The following subsection look at the ways universities can develop and support in-community programming.

5.1.1 Methodologies and relationships

Indigenous scholars advocating for an Indigenous research paradigm and methodologies consistently emphasize the importance of relationships in research (e.g., Smith 2013; Wilson 2008; a.o.). This includes relationships not only among the human participants in research, but also between the researcher and the research topic and questions. These relations are inherently dynamic, and as the research progresses, they are constantly negotiated and renegotiated such that new connections are made (Wilson 2008). Importantly, while Western research emphasizes and idealizes the detachment of the researcher as one who merely observes and analyzes rather than participates, the reality is that research – especially research on language – is never done in a social or political vacuum. In particular, language research which involves Indigenous communities in Canada always has real consequences for every party involved.

For this reason, the establishment, development, and ongoing negotiation of relationships is especially important in the context of collaboration between universities and Indigenous communities on projects which contribute to language revitalization. Participants at McGill's Symposium (MSIL) emphasized that relationships of this kind cannot be forced and often require significant time, energy, and commitment to form and maintain. As such, they recommended that McGill and other universities set aside considerable time and resources for this purpose. The indispensability of relationships in healthy parternships between linguists and Indigenous communities is also emphasized by Czaykowska-Higgins (2009:40), who reflects on her more than twenty years of working on projects of language documentation, reclamation, and revitalization with Indigenous communities in British Columbia:

> *"I have found that the most important prerequisite to and sine qua non of any kind of linguistic fieldwork, particularly when it invovles any degree of collaboration between linguist and community . . . is establishing and maintaining solid, respectful, reciprocal, and trusting working relationships between individuals and groups within the language-using community who have an interest in or knowledge about the community language and the linguists who wish to work with the community; between researchers and members of the governing bodies of the language-speaking communities; and between the language-speaking communities and the institutions that the linguists come from."*
>
> **–Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins (2009:40)**

Clearly, the significance of relationships in language work cannot be underestimated in the current context of reconciliation in Canada. Historically, however, the relationship between academic linguists and the speakers of Indigenous languages (and speakers of minority and endangered languages more generally) has tended to reflect the positivistic approaches endorsed by the academy, according to which linguists attempted to remain as detached and unbiased as possible. Czaykowska-Higgins (2009:17) characterizes this relationship as being one in which roles are clearly divided between the researcher and the researched, and between the expert (linguist) and non-expert (language-speaking community). Under this approach, which she calls the "linguist-focused model," the linguist, rather than the community, sets the research agenda according to his or her needs and desires. The priorities of the linguist are in turn informed by the requirements and expectations of the academy or funding agency which supports his or her work. Under the linguist-focused model framework, research output has typically been descriptions of language which are used for publications in academic journals, while the needs and desires of the community have generally taken a backseat to those of the linguist.

Fortunately, new models and approaches to research on Indigenous languages are being developed in accordance with the ideas of post-colonial schools of thought –including, for instance, critical theory – which hold that research can and should be directly engaged with efforts to improve the social situation of those to whom it connects. Cameron et al. (1992) identify three basic approaches to research which vary in the extent to which they engage with the community. These models of research are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but are rather points along a continuum which ranges from the least community-engaged to the most engaged. The continuum begins with Ethical Research, which is conceived of as research *on* a community; followed by Advocacy Research, which is *on* and *for* a community; and finally Empowering Research, which is *on*, *for*, and *with* a community. Importantly, in all these approaches, protocols are followed to minimize the imposition upon and damage done to the community, and hence all three can be thought of as ethically viable models of research.

Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) maps the models discussed in Cameron et al. (1992) onto linguistics, noting that there is a similar spectrum of collaborative approaches with regard to linguists' work with members of language-speaking communities. Here, Ethical Research corresponds to the linguist-focused method, which is promoted in older textbooks on linguistic fieldwork such as those by Samarin (1967) and Kibrik (1977). Advocacy Research, and to a greater extent Empowering Research, each recognize and respond to the sociopolitical factors which form the context of the research. A linguist working within Advocacy Research framework might advocate for the language rights of a particular community or create pedagogical materials for use in language revitalization efforts. This approach is reflected, for instance, in the works of Sutton & Walsh (1979) and Labov (1982). A linguist working in the framework Empowering Research might train community members in certain aspects of linguistics so that they can carry out projects on their own. This model is reflected more and more starting around 1980 – for example, in England (1998); Grinevald (1998); Nida (1981); among others. Crucially, though, in all of these cases the linguist remains the sole expert and primary researcher throughout the process.

According to Czaykowska-Higgins (2009), linguists can work with Indigenous communities in a manner which blurs the lines between researcher and researched even further. This framework, which she calls Community-Based Language Research (CBLR), is one in which the research that is "***on*** a language, and that us conducted ***for, with,*** and ***by*** the language community within which

the research takes place and which affects. (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009:24)" Linguists, for their part, are simply one of the experts and one of the contributors in the research, and the ideas, expertise, and priorities of the community are valued as much or more than those of the linguist. To be sure, she recognizes all four approaches to language research – not just CBLR – as valid methodologies whose appropriateness varies from context to context. The sociopolitical-cultural circumstances in which linguists work vary greatly, and it is up to the linguist to determine which framework best suits the situation.

However, it is important to note that the CBLR is the approach which most readily reflects ideas, protocols, and values of the various Indigenous governing bodies in Canada with respect to research. Many Indigenous communities, furthermore, have set their own guidelines and protocols which are used to determine whether a given research project is ethical and/or worthwhile. Such protocols generally require not only that the research be directly relevant to and potentially benificial for the community, but also that the community have an active role in setting the agenda and carrying out the research. This is not to say that no outsider linguist should ever publish data gleaned through fieldwork with an Indigenous community. It is to say, however, that there are inherent imbalances of power and privilege that come with the historical and current circumstances in Canada, and that a proper relationship must be negotiated so that no one is taken advantage of.

5.1.2 Programming in Indigenous communities

Perhaps the most important responsibility universities have regarding their relationships to Indigenous communities is to listen. As discussed in section 4, Indigenous communities have often been quite successful in developing and sustaining creative programs which respond directly to their linguistic and cultural needs. This was also reflected in discussions at our Symposium. One participant stressed that "the community knows what they want and knows what they need, so the university has to address the needs of the community and not their own." In general, the university should seek to carry out what another invitee called "responsive programming", which responds directly to the needs of Indigenous communities, as expressed by the communities themselves. There are a number of shapes this kind of university support might take, and participants spoke of the need for support in areas such as the procurement of sustainable funding for community-based programs; the accreditation of existing and ongoing in-community programs; and the development of university programs which are held in Indigenous communities. Below I discuss each of these areas in turn.

Procurement of funding

Although a number of language revitalization programs founded in Indigenous communities are doing great work, Indigenous communities often lack the kind of sustainable resources necessary to ensure the continued operation of these programs.[9] During our discussions at MSIL, one long-

[9] The amount of government funding for English and French language programs far exceeds that for Indigenous languages. According to the TRC (2015:156), the total federal funding allotted to Indigenous language programs is $9.1 million, while the budget of the Official Languages Program for English and French hovers around $350 million. It is clear that despite the government's lip service in the form of official apologies and promises of reconciliation, funding for Indigenous languages is still not considered a priority. Several participants at McGill's Symposium expressed that the government should be committed to investing as much money into supporting Indigenous languages

time teacher and administrator of an in-community Indigenous-language program explained that the dedication and desire to learn was very much present among young people, but that the lack of resources was often too big a barrier to overcome:

> *"[W]hen I started the adult immersion program . . . we had the students, and we had the students the first year. We had a good number of students. And they would tell us that they were on limited income, but they wanted to learn the language. So we're here for the language. By year two, they're saying, 'Bills are piling up. We can't keep with our bills. We need to work.' And what happened in the second year was that half of our students were offered jobs, so they opted out of the language program. They were sad to leave, but they had no choice but to support their families."*
>
> **–MSIL Invitee, May 2018**

In many cases, Indigenous communities must rely solely on community resources in order to carry out language programs. While there are certain grants and other packages made available to Indigenous communities through certain government programs, such funding is generally both limited and short-term in nature. Indigenous language champions at MSIL who had received such funding expressed that they often spend a considerable portion of their time fulfilling the bureaucratic requirements (e.g., budgets, reports, etc.) put in place by the funding organization. University-based linguists who work with Indigenous communities can be of help, first of all, by navigating and helping complete applications for grant money of this kind, and secondly, by helping take care of the bureaucratic work that comes along with receiving a grant. In doing so, they free up time for the community-based Indigenous-language teachers and administrators to carry out the demands of actually implementing and running their programs.

Giving credit where credit is due: Accrediting in-community programs

In addition to securing long-term, sustainable funding for community-based Indigenous language programs, universities can also aid Indigenous communities by accrediting these programs. There were several representatives of in-community language programs in attendance at MSIL. While these people were confident that in-community programs were generally meeting the needs of the community, they expressed a need for students to receive credit which could be used more universally for entrance into universities, attainment of educational degrees, and meeting the requirements of job applications. One participant with experience teaching both in community and on a university summed it up as follows:

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as it put into destructive establishments like Indian Residential Schools. As one invitee put it: "The huge amount of money that's gone into taking voices away from people, if a fraction of that money is put back in to allowing those voices to sing, we'll be OK."

> *"At our adult immersion schools they get at least two thousand hours of instruction and they become proficient speakers. At the universities you get about forty-two hours in a year. And that's OK, but we just have to understand that and recognize that these people are doing great. Let's give them credit and let's recognize them for the work they're doing."*
>
> **–MSIL Invitee, May 2018**

Finding ways to accredit existing in-community programs is a challenging matter, yet, like finding sustainable funding, it is an important part of making immersion programs a viable option for those who wish to pursue them. Furthermore, discussions at the Symposium suggested a more general need than formal accreditation of language courses. Namely, this was the need for the recognition of the cultural and linguistic expertise present in Indigenous communities. A number of invitees spoke of the vast knowledge of Elders in their communities and insisted that these same Elders must play a significant role in the preservation, revitalization, and maintenance of their languages. Universities, then, should work to ensure that Elders and other Indigenous experts are consulted throughout efforts to form and maintain parternships with communities.

Bringing the university to the community

Beyond the accreditation of existing in-community programs, there is a need and opportunity for universities to develop academic programs which are tailored to the needs of Indigenous language champions. University-based programs should be designed in a way that not only provides Indigenous people with the kind of knowledge and skills they can use in communities, but also responds directly to the challenges they face in attaining higher education.

Indigenous people who wish to become involved in efforts of language learning and language revitalization for their communities often already have significant commitments in their communities. According to Czaykowska-Higgins et al. (2017:142-143), "most are also parents and grandparents and have strong extended familial and cultural ties, as well as financial and caregiving responsibilities in their communities." For this reason, it is often not viable for such people to leave their communities for extended periods of times, and in order to ameliorate this issue, universities can develop academic programs which are carried out in Indigenous communities. The University of Victoria has been particularly successful in developing programs which "bring the university to the community." Programs developed at the University of Victoria are discussed in detail by Czaykowska-Higgins et al. (2017), who note that in community-based programs, "[s]tudents are able to learn their language with their grandmother next door to call upon as a resource, or with their child in their arms to sing to. (p. 143)" These same programs are tailored to the needs of Indigenous people in two further ways.

First, they are laddered, such that there are various entry and exit points along the way, and students are able to choose the path which most closely corresponds to their specific goals. For instance, the Bachelor of Education offered by the Department of Indigenous Education is a four-year program with two entry and exit points prior to the completion of the degree. Thus, after the first year of the program, students receive the Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization; after the second year, the Diploma in Indigenous Language Revitalization; and in the third and fourth years students complete the coursework for the B.Ed. These programs offer a mix of courses on

theory and practice in language revitalization, as well as courses geared toward building proficiency in Indigenous languages. Students and Indigenous communities are therefore able to focus on building and sharpening a skill set which is relevant for the kind of work they wish to pursue.

Second, the M.A. in Indigenous Language Revitalization, pioneered by Dr. Lorna Williams, Professor Emeritus at the University of Victoria and lifelong champion of Indigenous languages, offers the chance of 'exceptional entry' to those candidates who do not have the traditional academic background typically required for entry into a Masters program. The program offers admission to applicants "who have extensive expertise in the language and culture of their respective communities and have shown significant leadership in language and culture revitalization projects but not hold a baccalaureate degree. (https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-01/grad/programs/ied/admission-requirements.html#, accessed April 6, 2019)" The concept of exceptional entry thus responds to the fact that many Indigenous language champions have decided to forgo higher education in order to remain in their communities and contribute to efforts of language revitalization. It also reflects and affirms the notion that speakers of Indigenous languages have valuable linguistic and cultural expertise, and that they do not need to attend a university to have this knowledge validated.

Finally, Czaykowska-Higgins and her colleagues at the University of Victoria, along with other participants at MSIL, stressed that healthy relationships between universities and Indigenous communities are especially important in the development of community-based programs. This is especially true given that such programs should always be adapted, as much as possible, to the linguistic and cultural context of the community. The community has the responsibility of recruiting "local instructors, language experts, and language mentors" to facilitate the delivery of the program. This kind of collaborative model exemplified through community-based academic programs is conducive to efforts of reconciliation in that Indigenous communities are the primary agents in developing academic programs which respond directly to their needs. Universities, for their part, play the role of ally in providing financial and academic support to help Indigenous communities achieve their goals.

5.2 On-campus: Research, programming, and Indigenization

As suggested in the preceding section, the bulk of work in Indigenous language revitalization necessarily takes place in Indigenous communities, and therefore many of the responsibilities universities and academic linguists have in supporting language revitalization are also centered around work in communities. However, in accordance with the vision of the TRC as outlined in its Calls to Action (TRC 2015:319-339), and as reflected in the responses of various academic institutions across Canada to these calls to action, university campuses can also be a significant venue for reconciliation. Likewise, Indigenous language champions at MSIL spoke of various on-campus initiatives which could contribute to efforts of Indigenous language revitalization and reconciliation more generally. In this section I discuss three broad categories of such efforts: (i) research which contributes to language revitalization; (ii) programming which responds to the needs of Indigenous students and scholars while creating good neighbors among the non-Indigenous population; and (iii) Indigenization of the academy by creating a space which is welcoming to Indigenous students, faculty, and staff.

5.3.1 Research for Indigenous Language Revitalization

One potential point of collaboration between Indigenous communities and university-based scholars – whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous – is on research efforts which connect to the language work of Indigenous language champions. As discussed in section 4, some of the most innovative language learning methods are being developed by Indigenous people and carried out in Indigenous communities. Indigenous languages spoken in Canada often have grammatical properties which are not found in languages commonly taught in Canada. For instance, several are polysynthetic, which means that they have a relatively high morpheme-to-word ratio and, effectively, more information can be packed into a single word than in English or French. Effective teaching methods for Indigenous languages can and should take properties like polysynthesis into account, and research is needed to measure and compare the effectiveness and appropriateness of certain methods over others.

Indigenous communities have an immense stake in the success of language teaching and learning, as the survival and strengthening of their languages (through the restoration or continuation of intergenerational transmission) often hinges upon it. Although approaches like the Master-Apprentice Method and adult immersion programs have shown promising results, there is much room for improvement and still much to learn regarding the most successful methods for Indigenous language. Hence, invitees at MSIL encouraged universities to engage in research which is directly connected to Indigenous language revitalization. As one explained:

> *"Some of the most promising practices in adult language learning have been invented in your communities and you're living them in your communities. So you don't need to come to universities, necessarily, to learn that. But we can learn more about those things together, and then we can share them back. So learning about the quickest, most efficient ways to develop the next generation of speakers, whether they're children, adolescents, or adults – is something that I think that universities can assist with."*
>
> **–MSIL Invitee, May 2018**

The TRC suggests that research carried out in partnership with universities can address more than just pedagogical strategies; it can also "provide the necessary structure to document, analyze, and report research findings on reconciliation to a broader audience. (TRC 2015:242)" When possible, university-based scholars should follow the Community-Based Language Research approach framework, such that the research agenda is developed and carried out together with Indigenous communities. Several university-based scholars at MSIL had been involved in research partnerships between the university and the community, and they stressed the importance of open communication among all parties involved. In particular, the process of negotiating and agreeing upon the research plan is crucial, and sufficient time and resources should be allotted to this process. It is important to note, furthermore, that the progression of research undertaken with Indigenous communities may be slower than normal, and universities should take this into consideration and not try to force the process in order to meet university-internal deadlines. Czaykowska-Higgins (2009:43) explains that when it comes to collaborative research between universities and Indigenous communities, "the process itself is a result." She further suggests that an important challenge for universities is to develop appropriate methods for evaluating the success of

collaborative research and for assessing the work of scholars who are engaged in work with Indigenous communities.

5.3.2 Programming on campus

Research which advances knowledge surrounding issues in Indigenous language revitalization can be complemented by academic programs which raise awareness of these same issues. The TRC (2015:234) states that "education must remedy the gaps in historical knowledge that perpetuate ignorance and racism." Universities can contribute to these efforts, first of all, by creating and supporting Indigenous Studies programs which offer degrees focusing on various aspects of Indigenous histories, languages, cultures, and knowledge systems. Just as importantly, however, universities can implement mandatory training for all students, faculty, and staff, in issues of cross-cultural communication, cultural sensitivity, and other matters which stifle the ignorance and racism which hinder reconciliation.

Invitees at MSIL suggested that one of the primary goals of historically colonial universities like McGill, when it comes to efforts of reconciliation, should be to educate non-Indigenous students on how to be better allies to Indigenous people:

> *"At the university and in the city, it's about creating good neighbors. We need that help. Those students in there are eventually going to be policy makers, work in government, and they're going to support us. One of the best ways to give them a lens into how we think, our histories, the challenges we've gone through, through the language."*
>
> **–MSIL Invitee, May 2018**

It is important that universities be able to provide education on Indigenous issues to all of its students, faculty, and staff, and not just to those directly involved in Indigenous Studies. Individual faculties, departments, and programs can also take steps to create programming which is more tailored to the needs of Indigenous students. We learned at the Symposium, for instance, that departments of Linguistics are generally not designed to support Indigenous students who need the tools of linguistics to reclaim and revitalize their languages. One Indigenous graduate student explained that the work she did with her community was generally not counted toward her degree, but was rather seen as 'extra'. This caused her to have to delay some of the milestones in her program:

> *"because the program was not meant for people like me . . . So one of the things I've been fighting for is that 'applied' work, work for my community, that should be counted in the program . . .* ***because I've got a responsibility to my community, and that comes first****."*
>
> **–MSIL Invitee, May 2018**

This constitutes another example of how universities and individual departments can rethink their measures of success and the requirements of their programs to better support efforts of reconciliation. Departments of Linguistics, in particular, can support students who work with Indigenous communities by recognizing and rewarding the time spent establishing relationships in the community. Indigenous students who are pursuing their education in order to give back to

their communities in the area of language reclamation and revitalization can and should have their community-based work count toward the requirements of their degree.

5.3.3 Indigenizing the academy

The creation of new programs and the revamping of existing ones to better support Indigenous students should be accompanied by efforts to make the university campus a more welcoming place for Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. MSIL panelists suggested that there are a number of ways universities can do this, and here I discuss three of these: (i) the hiring and support of Indigenous faculty and staff; (ii) the creation of networks of support for Indigenous students (iii) the establishment of physical spaces designed for and dedicated to the use of Indigenous students.

First, there is a general need for more Indigenous faculty and staff at universities across Canada, and many are taking steps to make necessary hires.[10] However, simply hiring Indigenous people to work within a university system which retains its colonial structure does little to further reconciliation. Moreover, university-based Indigenous scholars, including those present at MSIL, often express that they have difficulty reconciling the expectations of the university with the responsibilities and commitment they have to their communities. In this sense, Indigenous scholars often end up doing significantly more work than their non-Indigenous counterparts, as they must carry out the normal academic job description while engaging in community-based work that falls outside this description. Thus, universities can support Indigenous faculty and staff by acknowledging their commitments to Indigenous communities, valuing this work and valorizing it by counting it toward promotions such as tenureship.

A greater presence of Indigenous faculty and staff can also lead to better support for Indigenous students. Universities can develop a network of support for Indigenous students by creating mentoring and counseling programs specifically designed for Indigenous students. The University of Victoria, for instance, offers mentoring programs which allow students to connect with and benefit from the knowledge and wisdom of Elders from nearby Indigenous communities. As expressed in the university's Indigenous Plan (2017-2022), "The Elders participating in Elders' Voices and as Elders-in-Residence at UVic support Indigenous students through challenging times and help students reconnect with their own teachings and practices." In general, Idigenous students should be supported in a way that makes them feel a sense of belonging on university campuses, and for this to happen universities like McGill must ensure that there is a significant Indigenous presence on campus.

Finally, there are a number of concrete steps universities can take to make their campuses more welcoming for Indigenous peoples and languages. Perhaps most importantly, universities can allot a space for the creation of an Indigenous People's House or other area which is dedicated to the use of Indigenous people on campus. Ideally, this space will be at a central location on campus such that the Indigenous presence is highly visible. A participant at McGill's Symposium further suggested that, with the support of Indigenous people, universities create signage in the local Indigenous language(s), a symbolic but nonetheless significant measure. A representative of the

[10] It is worth acknowledging that applicants for academic positions are typically allowed to self-identify as Indigenous or non-Indigenous, and there have been cases of 'ethnic fraud', in which the authenticity of applicants' claims to an Indigenous identity has been called into question. This is a complex and sensitive issue, and I will not look at it further in this paper. The reader is directed to Pewewardy 2004 and references therein for a thorough treatment of this topic.

University of British Columbia offered an interesting anecdote which indicates how the use of Indigenous languages on campus can lead to opportunities for reconciliation:

> *"Seven years ago, UBC started renaming some of the student residences. Some of the old ones had some very problematic anthropological names. And through a partnership . . . led by our students, traditional place names were gifted to the university, which have Salish spelling with complex Indigenous orthography. And the university said, 'Oh dear, how on earth will the pizza man be able to deliver the pizza to (names)? And the community said and the students said, 'They should learn. You should all learn.' So we have to educate upwards, and we have to listen to our students who are paving the way."*
>
> **–MSIL Participant, 2018**

This story speaks to the responsibilities of all Canadians to engage with Indigenous languages, and it echoes the words of one Residential School Survivor – mentioned above – who recommends that all Canadians learn basic words and phrases in the Indigenous language(s) spoken in the area they live. These seemingly simple steps can go a long way in efforts of decolonization and reconciliation.

To conclude this section, it is important to keep in mind that it was not long ago that schools were places where Indigenous peoples were discouraged and even severely punished for speaking their languages and expressing their cultures. Nowadays, schools are called upon to lift up Indigenous peoples and their languages and to work toward a future where they are valued and respected within Canadian society. This irony is acknowledged and elaborated upon by a number of authors (e.g., Czaykowska-Higgins, *et al.* 2017; Haynes *et al.* 2010; Hinton 2011; Poetsch & Lowe 2010; Suina 2004; a.o.), and it is at the root of much distrust among Indigenous people toward the involvement of educational institutions in language reclamation. Non-Indigenous students and educators must work especially hard toward building trusting relations with Indigenous people which promote healthy, effective, and sustainable collaboration at the intersection of education and reconciliation.

6. Summary and conclusion

This paper has looked at several important aspects of Indigenous Language Revitalization. The focus has been on the Canadian context, which is informed by the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural factors specific to Canada. In particular, the system of Indian Residential Schools and other assimilatory measures on the part of colonizers have led to the current state in which Indigenous languages are in need of revitalization and in which Indigenous peoples are often distrustful of settlers who wish to help. For these same reasons, however, both ILR and education more generally are key in efforts of reconciliation.

ILR in Canada necessarily involves more than language teaching and language learning. It calls for decolonizing measures such as instilling value in the language – among non-Indigenous people, but especially among Indigenous people. It also entails Indigenous communities reclaiming

authority over the language as well as domains in which it can be used as a viable means of communication. Those communities engaged in language work are further challenged by the lack of existing didactic materials on their languages and a general lack of resources and governmental support for their endeavors. Fortunately, Indigenous people all over the world are rising up to meet these challenges and galvanizing language revitalization through their own linguistic and cultural expertise.

At the same time, many Indigenous people are expressing that there are areas in which collaboration with outside people and institutions can lead to positive outcomes in the area of ILR, and for the purposes of reconciliation more broadly. Universities, and Linguistics departments more specifically, are areas where the two components of reconciliation mentioned above – namely, Indigenous languages and education – naturally come together. Some of the skills in which linguists are trained can be employed to support Indigenous communities engaged in language revitalization. Universities and individual linguists can be allies to Indigenous communities by carrying out research which informs best practices in ILR, and by tailoring academic programs to meet the needs of Indigenous language champions. Much of this work is necessarily done in Indigenous communities, but there is work to be done on university campuses as well. In particular, there is a need for a greater Indigenous presence – in the student body, among faculty and staff, and through the transformation of physical spaces (e.g. with signage in Indigenous languages, with the creation of Indigenous student centres, etc.).

I conclude by echoing the words of several linguists who note that these are very exciting times in Linguistics. We have the opportunity to partner with Indigenous people and to come together around language. By establshing the proper mindset, nurturing our relationships, and putting our minds together, we can work together toward a future in which Indigenous languages are ascribed the value they deserve.

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