THE TEACHINGS OF OUR ANCESTORS: A VISION OF OJIBWE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE REVITALIZATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE RED CLIFF COMMUNITY

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother and father, the late Victoria “Toddy” Gokee and Alex “Ike” Gokee. With his quiet strength and wisdom, Dad taught me more than any educational system ever could. Mom’s legacy of fierce but compassionate advocacy for our people will continue for many generations. She has always been and will always be my hero.

I also dedicate this to my beloved husband, Michael “Aya” Rindal, who walked along side of me for thirty years before the Creator called him home. He gave me the strength and support to persevere, when I needed it the most. With great honor I give my unconditional love and heartfelt appreciation to our children, Linda, Eugene, and Victoria, for hanging in there with me though this difficult, yet important journey.

I sincerely thank my many brothers, sisters, extended family members, and colleagues at the Red Cliff Early Childhood Center for their patience and support.

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Last, I dedicate this work to my ancestors, all my relations of this world, and to future generations of our people, the Red Cliff Ojibwe.
Abstract

This study explores Ojibwe language and cultural knowledge for young tribal children (prenatal through age five) in Red Cliff, a small, rural Ojibwe reservation located in northern Wisconsin. Ojibwe language and culture in the Red Cliff community is severely threatened, with only one fluent speaker remaining whose first language is Ojibwe. In the context of language and culture loss, this study reviews the devastating effects of oppression and the history of American Indian education. Theories of language acquisition as well successful models of indigenous language and culture revitalization were examined. Tribal elders and community members with language and cultural knowledge were engaged in a collaborative process to explore what young Ojibwe children might know, learn, and understand about their language and culture. Their voices were heard, honored, and retold for the purpose of strengthening language and culture revitalization efforts in the community.
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CHAPTER I: PROBLEM AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

The teachings of our ancestors will not die. Anishinaabe or “the People” in Ojibwe language, continue to survive. The cumulative effects of colonization and historical oppression of indigenous peoples, however, continue to erode the very existence of indigenous languages and cultures throughout the world. Indeed, the preservation and maintenance of tribal languages that remain in American Indian and Alaska Native communities is viewed by many as the most critical issue facing indigenous peoples throughout Indian country. Traditional ways that have survived are in grave danger of extinction, unless native people act now to reclaim them. We must do so for our ancestors. We must do so for our children. We must do so for seven generations yet to come.

Background of the Problem

At the outset, I must clearly state my primary motivation for doing this research project. As an Anishinaabe woman, born and raised on the Red Cliff reservation, I have lived and witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of colonization and oppression on our people, in the form of loss of language and way of life, shame, despair, and hopelessness. I have seen a well-established colonized mindset operating among our people, many of whom sometimes unknowingly perpetuate the vicious cycle of oppression and suboppression, which manifests itself in the form of dependency, dysfunction, alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, and other forms of self-destruction. Yet, I cannot and will not give up hope. In spite of our colonized reality, I have seen a more powerful force emerge within a growing circle of my community—a
force so strong, it cannot be held back. This force is fueled by deep spiritual strength and a growing desire to reclaim traditional ways of being and knowing. Thus, my own personal agenda for conducting this study was to contribute to that growing spiritual force, to find ways to strengthen the language and culture revitalization movement in my community. What I learned in the process of doing this research may has indeed enabled me to more effectively facilitate change. Fulfilling the requirements of the academy was secondary. This is evident in that it took me four years to complete minor final revisions to chapter five following my final defense in 2005. The circle of life took priority.

This study begins with a discussion of oppression theory as a way of understanding how social, political, economic, educational, and cultural forces have historically served, and continue to serve, dominant group interests through oppression of marginalized groups. Founded on principles of equality, equity, and social justice, oppression theory seeks to transform society by empowering the powerless (Memmi, 1965; Freire, 2002; Kiernan, 2000; Smith, 1998). The dominant educational system is clearly one of the primary vehicles for maintaining existing social inequalities based on class, gender, and race (McLaren, 1989; Gramski, 1995; Apple, 2003; Shor, 1992; Lather, 1998). Often aligned with critical theory, this perspective challenges traditional Western assumptions about what constitutes knowledge, who defines knowledge, and whose agenda knowledge serves (Smith, 2001). Native educators and leaders urge indigenous communities to confront the remnants of oppression as the first step toward liberation and freedom (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Gollnick, 2000).
The residual effects of colonization and its legacy of oppression continue to pose severe threats to the survival of indigenous languages and cultures. Native communities are in crisis (McCarty, Watahomigie, & Yamamoto, 1999; Greymorning, 1999; Cleary & Peacock, 1998), with only 210 of over 300 pre-contact indigenous languages remaining in what is now the United States and Canada (Gibbs, 2002; Krauss, 1996; Estes, 1999; Peacock & Day, 1999). Crawford (1996) developed seven hypotheses of language loss, describing external and internal forces that may provide insights into indigenous language restoration and preservation efforts. Fishman (1991) proposed a continuum of eight stages of language loss, with stage eight being closest to extinction and stage one being closest to survival (Fishman, 1991). The findings of Cleary and Peacock (1998) provide further insights into the complexity of language issues facing native communities.

Exploration of issues relating to native language and culture must include a discussion of American Indian education. Traditional education was a lifelong process that began at birth and continued throughout adulthood; transmission of knowledge occurred naturally through ceremonies, songs, and stories, by listening, watching, and participating (Peacock & Wisuri, 2002; Grover, 1999). For those who survived genocide, American Indian children were forced to attend boarding and mission schools, where they were forbidden to speak their language or openly practice their culture (Child, 1999; Grover, 1999). An array of existing literature provides a comprehensive review of the complex social and historical factors that collectively continue to impact American Indian education, languages, and cultures to this day (Zinn, 1997; Danziger, 1990; Reyhner, 1992; Peacock & Wisuri, 2002; Satz, 2002;
During the past 30 years, the shift from assimilation to self-determination has created a period of cultural renaissance (Wilkins, 2002; Pease-Pretty On Top, 2003; Peacock & Wisuri, 2002).

Studies of early brain development have found a link between the neurological capacity to learn language, known as critical periods or “time windows” (Morgan, 1996; Puckett, Marshall, & Davis, 1999; Rovee-Collier, 1995; Slegers, 1997). DeHouwer (1999) and Cantoni (1996) dispel some common myths about language acquisition. Recent studies confirm a positive relationship between native language learning and increased cognitive abilities (Demmert, 1994; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Pease-Pretty On Top, 2003).

In terms of language and culture revitalization, Reyhner (1999) offers strategies on what communities can do to strengthen local efforts at each of Fishman’s stages of language loss. Once considered a “dead” language for nearly 2000 years, Hebrew is the only language that has been fully revernacularized, with millions of speakers today (Fishman, 1991; Crawford, 1995; Peacock & Day, 1999). Studies of indigenous communities with demonstrated success in language and culture preservation found common characteristics, all of which focused on a comprehensive, community-wide approach (Peacock & Day, 1999; Stiles, 1997; Pease-Pretty On Top, 2003; DeJong, 1998).

I selected five indigenous immersion models to explore in-depth. First, the Maori of New Zealand are known worldwide as leaders in the indigenous language and culture revitalization movement. Smith (2001), Walker (1990), Simon and Smith
(2000), and Durie (1998) described the development of Te Kohanga Reo (language
nests) as a critical part of the early movement. The philosophy central to the language
nests is summarized by Johnston (1994) and May (1998). The Maori model has proven
to be a phenomenal success in many respects, fostering renewed vitality and strength of
the people (King, 2001).

A second model I reviewed was the native Hawaiian model. During the past 20
years, the reemergence of Hawaiian voice in education accompanied larger efforts to
transform Hawaiian society from a colonized mindset into one that reclaimed self-
provide a comprehensive description of the Hawaiian language revitalization
movement, which, like the Maori, began with the establishment of Puana Leo (language
nests).

The third model I explored was the Pikuni (Blackfeet) model in Montana. Kipp
(2000) and Still Smoking (1997) provide an overview of the development of the Piegan
Institute, which now oversees three immersion schools. Kipp offers valuable “lessons
learned” to others interested in beginning or strengthening immersion efforts.

Fourth, I looked at the Arapaho model in Wyoming. Greymorning (1997, 1999,
2001) examined the growth and development of the Arapaho language immersion
program on the Wind River reservation and discusses language revitalization strategies
and methods that are part of a renewed effort to establish a new generation of Arapaho-
speaking children. Hale (2001) points to several lessons learned through the Arapaho
immersion program.
Finally, I reviewed the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe immersion model in northern Wisconsin. Hermes (2004) and Pease Pretty On Top (2003) discussed how the Lac Courte Oreille Ojibwe language immersion effort became a reality. This effort was spearheaded by a small group of language activists who worked tirelessly in formal and informal ways to revitalize the language and rekindle the ways of the Ojibwe.

While the literature provides insights into the many issues, challenges, barriers, and possible strategies for native communities seeking to restore and preserve language and culture, there is a void in the language and culture revitalization needs of Ojibwe communities, and none of the literature addresses the unique needs of the Red Cliff (Wisconsin) tribe. Yazzie (2000) referred to the challenges native communities face in view of the diversity of understandings of language, culture, and culturally appropriate education: “While we might agree that it is important to incorporate language and culture in education, we have a much harder time agreeing on what aspects to focus on, what the concepts mean, and how to implement them” (Yazzie, 2000, p. 14). This study explores Ojibwe language and culture restoration and preservation issues targeting young children in the Red Cliff (Wisconsin) community.

**Statement of the Problem**

What might young Ojibwe children (prenatal through age five) in the community of Red Cliff know, learn, and understand about their language and culture? The results of this study may be used to strengthen native language and cultural development for young children. The process of doing this study has served to support and strengthen a growing movement in the Red Cliff community to revitalize traditional
ways of being and knowing, to recapture the spirit of our ancestors by engaging in a collaborative dialogue with the community.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore what young Ojibwe children (prenatal through age five) might know, learn, and understand about their language and culture. The process of conducting this study has contributed to the larger movement in the Red Cliff community to reclaim indigenous knowledge. A more comprehensive community-wide effort, operating at many different levels within the community, has been strengthened in the process.

**Research Questions**

This study seeks to support and strengthen the growing movement in the Red Cliff community to reclaim indigenous ways of knowing. By engaging the people in a collaborative dialogue to explore language and cultural development for young children, the process of doing this study has put forth an empowering framework within the community which is necessary for change to occur.

One broad, overarching question guided this study: What might young Ojibwe children (prenatal through age five) know, learn, and understand about their language and culture?

There were two sub-questions:

1. How might Ojibwe cultural knowledge for young children be described?
2. How might Ojibwe language knowledge for young children be described?

**Assumptions of the Study**
It is widely acknowledged that native languages and cultures are dangerously close to extinction. Unless native communities make a concerted effort to retain these traditional ways of being, it will be too late. It is also known that indigenous language and culture are inextricably linked. As part of a comprehensive, community-wide approach, early childhood education is an essential part of the circle. For children and families in tribal communities with few fluent native language speakers and few tribal members with knowledge of traditional ways, it may be the beginning. If we do nothing, it will without a doubt be the end.

**Significance of the Study**

With only one fluent speaker remaining whose first language is Ojibwe, the Red Cliff community is indeed severely threatened with loss of language. A handful of tribal members have learned the language with varying levels of proficiency. Although efforts are being made within some circles of the community to restore and preserve Ojibwe language and traditional cultural teachings, the reality is that few tribal members speak the language or have knowledge of traditional teachings unique to the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. We must find a way for transmission of this indigenous knowledge to occur.

By exploring what young children (prenatal through age five) might know about their language and culture, this study aligns with the current movement to revitalize traditional ways. The findings of this study can be used by the Red Cliff community to enhance native language and cultural development for young children, while actively engaging the larger community in the process. Ultimately, this study may serve to
spark a community-wide initiative to address language and culture restoration as part of an overall effort to confront educational issues and create long-term solutions.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are used:

*Ojibwe* – tribal group of American Indian people; largest populations reside in what is now known as Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Canada; also known as Chippewa.

*Anishinaabe* – Ojibwe term for “the People” or “original People.”

*Indigenous* – native or original people of a territory or country, with unique cultures, traditions, beliefs, customs, languages, and social institutions.

*Indian country* – regions of what is now the United States and Canada that are governed by indigenous peoples.

*Know* – to recognize or to be aware of the nature, meaning, or significance of something.

*Learn* – the process of discovering knowledge.

*Understand* – to grasp the nature, meaning, or significance of something.

*Culture* – the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior common to a social, ethnic, or racial group with shared values, attitudes, practices, and modes of communication.

*Language* – a systematic means of communication within a country, region, community, or culture having shared meanings.
Qualitative research – an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994, p. 2).

Narrative research – a form of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. This information is then retold by the researcher in a collaborative narrative (Creswell, 2003, p. 15).

Summary

What might young Ojibwe children (prenatal through age five) in the community of Red Cliff know, learn, and understand about their language and culture? The findings of this study can be used to strengthen native language and cultural development for young children. The process of doing the study has served to support and strengthen a growing movement in the Red Cliff community to revitalize traditional ways of being and knowing, to recapture the spirit of our ancestors by engaging in a collaborative dialogue with the community.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study explores what young Ojibwe children (prenatal through age five) in the community of Red Cliff might know, learn, and understand about their language and culture. The findings of this study have been used to strengthen native language and cultural development for young children. The process of doing the study has served to support and strengthen a growing movement in the Red Cliff community to revitalize traditional ways of being and knowing to recapture the teachings of our ancestors by engaging in a collaborative dialogue with the community.

The purpose of this study was to explore what young Ojibwe children might know, learn and understand about their language and culture. The process of conducting this study has paralleled a larger movement in the Red Cliff community to reclaim indigenous knowledge. I am hopeful that a comprehensive, community-wide effort, operating at many different levels, will continue for generations to come.

This chapter consists of a selected review of literature related to oppression theory, language and culture loss, the history of American Indian education, and language acquisition. The chapter ends with an examination of five successful models of language and culture revitalization in indigenous communities.

Road Map

This section begins by reviewing relevant literature related to oppression and colonization, as they have profoundly impacted the language and culture of indigenous groups throughout the world. Next is a review of theories of language loss, the history of American Indian education, and language acquisition. The chapter ends with a look
at selected models with demonstrated success in revitalizing language and culture within five indigenous communities.

**Literature Review**

**Oppression Theory**

Written and oral histories tell the horrific story of genocide inflicted upon indigenous peoples around the globe through colonization. European invasion, conquest, and forced assimilation are familiar themes to many indigenous groups; entire tribes were exterminated, entire cultures and languages destroyed. Kiernan (2000) describes the powerful, long-lasting effects of colonialism on generations of indigenous peoples: “Oppression has enforced the colonial mindset of disempowerment and hopelessness,” making the work toward social justice difficult (cited in Benham & Heck, 1998). Over time, indigenous peoples themselves often became indoctrinated into assimilationist thinking, a colonial mentality resulting in internalized racism. Oppression theory tells us that the first step in moving beyond this colonized mentality is to recognize that we, as indigenous peoples, are products of externally imposed oppression as well as our own internalized oppression. Confronting this reality is necessary to becoming agents in our own liberation.

Memmi (1965), one of the founders of oppression theory, speaks to the pathological condition that colonization inflicts on both the colonizer and the colonized. He described a phenomenon whereby the colonized themselves become colonizers, due to a conflicting duality that exists within colonized peoples, one being self-hate and the other being hatred for the colonized. Memmi concluded that the only cure for this pathological condition is to break the chains of oppression through liberation.
Perhaps the most widely acknowledged author about oppression theory, Paulo Freire (2002) describes a similar phenomenon that occurs within powerless groups, whereby the oppressed become “sub-oppressors.” Freire attributes the pervasive injustice in society to unequal social stratification based on race, class, and gender. In his analysis of the relationship between power and knowledge, he asserts that those of high power and status (the oppressors) are at the top and control the rest of society (the oppressed); those in control maintain the status quo through oppression of marginalized groups. With a model founded on the principles of equality, equity, and social justice, Freire advocates for transforming society by empowering the powerless. Thus, according to Freire, freedom from oppression can only become actualized through resistance and liberation, the first step of which is “conscientization,” or raising the consciousness of the oppressed.

Freire’s analysis of the educational system as one of the primary vehicles for maintaining social inequalities includes a discussion of the “banking” system prevalent in mainstream education. In this system, education becomes an act of depositing selected information from teachers to students. He views this banking system as an instrument that serves the interests of the oppressors by creating docile, complacent, and passive citizens who often unwittingly become indoctrinated into the dominant racist, classist, and sexist ideology. Freire advocates for a more emancipatory model, whereby education becomes an arena for students to develop critical consciousness necessary for change. Thus, the educational system, which has historically served to destroy indigenous ways of knowing, can become a tool for liberation and empowerment for indigenous peoples.
Freire’s work has been extended by others. McLaren (1989) maintains that “schools have always functioned in ways that rationalize the knowledge industry into class-divided tiers; that reproduce inequality, racism, and sexism; and that fragment democratic social relations through an emphasis on competitiveness and cultural ethnocentrism” (McLaren, 1989, p. 161). Gramski (1995) uses the concept of hegemony to describe this ability of the dominant group to legitimate social reality (including knowledge) as established “common sense.” Apple (2003) further analyzed the relationship between power and knowledge in his discussion of “official” knowledge. He describes how only some knowledge and ways of organizing it get declared to be legitimate, or “official” (p. 7). Shor (1992), in his development of a practical approach to an empowered education, discusses the many ways in which educators can promote and facilitate a more liberatory educational approach. Lather (1998) furthers our understanding of empowerment in her description of empowerment as a process of “analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the condition of our lives” (p. 4).

Noted indigenous scholar Linda Smith (2001) has written extensively on Maori education and research, and she situates Kaupapa Maori theory (defined by and for Maori) as embracing the notions of critique, resistance, struggle, and emancipation. Central to Kaupapa Maori theory is “an analysis of existing power structures and societal inequalities…[it] therefore aligns with critical theory in…exposing underlying assumptions that serve to conceal the power relations that exist within society and the
ways in which dominant groups...justify...the maintenance of inequalities and the continued oppression of Maori people” (p. 186).

Drawing on the work of critical theorists such as Freire, Apple, Gramski, and Habermas, Graham Smith (1998) developed the Kaupapa Maori model of transformation or praxis. While the Freireian model of transformative action (Figure 1) is linear and progressive, beginning with conscientization, moving to resistance, and then to praxis, the Maori model (Figure 2) is represented as a cycle, maintaining that these elements may occur in any order and may occur simultaneously (Smith, 1998, p. 16). In other words, using the Kaupapa Maori model, individuals and groups can enter the cycle at any time, from any position, and do not necessarily have to start at the point of conscientization. For example, Graham Smith noted how “some individuals have been caught up in transformative praxis (i.e., taking their children to Kohanga Reo [language nests]), and this has led to conscientization and participation in resistance” (Smith, 1998).

Figure 1: Freireian model of transformation.

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Conscientization  Resistance  Transformative action
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Figure 2: Kaupapa Maori model of transformation.
Cleary and Peacock (1998) discuss American Indian education within the context of oppression theory. They provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the nature of oppression, the oppressor, internalized oppression or “suboppressor behavior,” and the impact of internalized oppression on generations of American Indian people (p. 63). They extend suboppressor behavior to include a form of self-oppression that occurs through self-destructive acts such as alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide.
Cleary and Peacock challenge educators, communities, and individuals to confront the remnants of oppression as the first step toward liberation and freedom.

Gollnick (2000) clearly echoes this perspective:

The history of oppression has created many Native American communities who produce self-inflicted wounds that can hold their communities down, often through alcoholism or almost insurmountable feelings of jealousy.

Unfortunately, this is an area that is not discussed openly. The question becomes, “How do we reawaken souls to the beauty within?” The toughest challenge is learning to honor ourselves…it’s all about freeing the mind.” (cited in Benham, 2000, p. 111)

The impact of oppression and suboppression on traditional ways of being and knowing has been devastating for indigenous peoples across the globe. The following section examines the effects of colonization within the context of language loss.

**Language Loss**

The residual effects of colonization and its legacy of oppression continue to pose severe threats to the survival of indigenous languages and cultures. The loss of a language to its people is a “private and public wound yet unhealed, a concrete and visible tear in the web of family relationships and community life…a function of asymmetrical power relations and ideologies of domination and control” (McCarty, Watahomigie, & Yamamoto, 1999, p. 3).

Greymorning (1999) captures the critical sense of urgency many native communities face:
Though we have survived centuries of contact and conflict, today we are faced with a crisis that is perhaps more significant than any we have ever faced in our histories. It is a crisis of the loss of our languages, and this crisis has reached a point that if we are not able to effectively pass on our languages to our youth, within the next 15 years we could witness the loss of as much as 85% of the Indian languages that are still presently spoken. We are in effect running a gauntlet. (cited in Reyhner, Cantoni, St. Clair, & Yazzie, 1999, p. 6)

Over a decade ago, Michael Krauss “sent a shudder through the discipline of linguistics with his prediction that half of the 6,000 or so languages spoken in the world would cease to be uttered within a century” (Gibbs, 2002, p. 80). Even more alarming was his 1996 testimony on the status of Native American languages, reporting that of over 300 pre-contact indigenous languages spoken in North America, only 210 languages remain (Krauss, 1996). Of those remaining 210 indigenous languages, 175 are spoken in the United States and the other 35 in Canada. According to Krauss (1996), of those still spoken in the United States, only 20 (11%) are being learned by children at home in the traditional way from parents and elders. That leaves 155 (89%) of the 175 languages spoken in the United States as “moribund,” spoken only by adults who no longer teach them to the next generation (Crawford, 1995).

According to Estes (1999), there are approximately 43,000 Ojibwe language speakers in North America; yet, in 1995, Rosemary Christensen found less than 500 fluent Ojibwe language speakers in the tri-state area of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan (cited in Peacock & Wisuri, 2002, p. 32). The tragic reality in my own community of Red Cliff is that only one elder is left whose first language is Ojibwe.
Crawford (1996) examined complex social and historical factors, both external and internal, involved in this indigenous language crisis. He developed a “working hypothesis” about language loss, citing seven primary factors, all contributing to what he terms, the “language shift.” Those primary factors are (Crawford, 1996):

1. External factors, such as suppressive United States government policies strictly forbidding use of native languages, contributed to the language shift. While these externally imposed oppressive forces played a significant role, they are not exclusively responsible.

2. Internal factors, such as mobility, an economy increasingly requiring English, mass media replacing traditional forms of education and pastimes, and increasing social identification with the larger society, continue to impact language loss. I would add suboppressive behavior as a significant internal factor contributing to loss of language and culture.

3. Language loss reflects a corresponding shift from traditional indigenous values to those of Western society. Encroaching individualism, pragmatism, and materialism have eroded traditional ways of thinking and have consequently affected language loss.

4. Efforts to reverse language loss must also involve a concomitant change in values back to traditional belief systems. A larger social movement is necessary to realign attitudes and values of the indigenous community.

5. Language loss cannot be reversed by outsiders, however well-intentioned. The desire, the will, and the social movement to revive the language must come from within the people.
6. Language revitalization efforts in a community must take into consideration the stage of language loss the community is in and develop broad-based strategies to deal with the community’s unique needs and situation. In terms of stage, Crawford refers to Fishman’s (1991) eight stages of language loss, which I will discuss later.

7. Communities as a whole must generate a language revitalization movement operating at many levels from within. Developing the vision, strategies, and domains for language restoration requires social change; this movement must emerge from indigenous leadership within the community.

Crawford’s hypothesis for reversing the language shift offers indigenous communities a framework from which language revitalization efforts can be developed and strengthened; however, it is important to consider the unique social and historical forces affecting each community. What may work in one community may not work in another, depending on the stage of language loss.

Based on his worldwide study of endangered languages, Fishman (1991) identified a continuum of eight stages of language loss, with stage eight being closest to extinction and stage one being closest to survival. The continuum is (Fishman, 1991):

- Stage eight – only a few elders still speak the language; these are the most seriously endangered languages, which are on the verge of extinction.
- Stage seven – only adults beyond childbearing age still speak the language.
- Stage six – there is still some intergenerational use of the language in the homes.
- Stage five – the language is still very much alive in the community, but it is still the minority language spoken.
• Stage four – the language is required in elementary schools as the language of instruction and not an add-on course.

• Stage three – the language is used at the workplace among employees (but not supervisors) in the community.

• Stage two – the language is used by some tribal government services and by some mass media in the community.

• Stage one – the language is used by tribal government offices and in higher education in the community.

Fishman (1991) asserted that moving a severely endangered language from stage eight to stage five is the minimum requirement to save an endangered language from extinction. There is no doubt that Red Cliff is at stage eight, the most endangered stage of language loss.

Is it possible to revive a language that is nearly extinct? The only language that has been fully revernacularized, or revived from written form, is Hebrew (Fishman, 1996). After being a “dead” language for almost 2000 years, today Hebrew is spoken by millions of people (Crawford, 1995). Israel accomplished this unprecedented feat through a national commitment and by making Hebrew the official language of Israel (Peacock & Day, 1999). After thousands of years of suppression, their voices are now heard. The message for native communities, whose language may be on the verge of language death, is that our once silenced voices can and must also be heard.

Cleary and Peacock’s (1998) study of American Indian education included an examination of the current state of indigenous languages across Indian country. Their
findings provide the following insights into the complexity of language issues facing native communities (Cleary & Peacock, 1998, pp. 149-150):

- Historical efforts to eliminate indigenous languages are having a profound effect on American Indian education today, with possible impending loss of hundreds of languages. Only a concerted effort by schools, families, and communities will ensure their survival.

- Language maintenance is of paramount concern in Indian country, as evidenced by the multitude of efforts in many communities.

- There are two schools of thought about the relationship between languages and culture: one is that the demise of the language will mean the demise of the culture; the other says that aspects of culture can exist without language.

- Indigenous language teachers have rich cultural backgrounds but may not be trained as teachers. Teachers must develop their own curriculum and materials where none or few existed before.

- Some American Indian students are under intense peer pressure not to learn or use their tribal language.

- Cultural and spiritual issues sometimes clash with language revitalization efforts.

- Developing an orthography (standard system for writing) is a barrier to language preservation in some communities.

- Dialectic differences and varying levels of fluency complicate language efforts.

- Urban American Indian students may find access to language instruction hindered by the number of tribes and languages represented in their schools and communities.

- There are obvious relationships between native language use, literacy, and English.
• Teachers can encourage the preservation and maintenance of indigenous languages by modeling and promoting their use in schools. Communities must seek everyday uses for the languages in the community. Students need to understand the purposes for knowing the language.

• Immersion programs are strongly recommended for teaching languages that are not currently being spoken by young people.

**History of American Indian Education**

Exploration of issues relating to indigenous language and culture must include a discussion of the historical context of American Indian education.

**Pre-contact**

Prior to European contact, traditional indigenous education was a lifelong journey imbedded within and throughout all social institutions. As a holistic process, education, or transmission of knowledge, was and still is a lifelong experience that began prior to birth and continued throughout adulthood. Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and learning were inseparable from daily living. Teaching and learning occurred naturally through ceremonies, stories, songs, and everyday life by listening, watching, and participating. Everyone was a part of the circle and shared in this responsibility. Parents, along with aunties, uncles, sisters, brothers, and other extended family and community members embraced and nurtured young people in this lifelong journey. Elders, grandmothers, and grandfathers played a particularly important role, as they were highly revered for their wisdom, patience, gentleness, generosity, kindness, and love. Ojibwe people refer to elders as *gichi-ayaag*, which means “the great ones.” Storytelling was an effective method of teaching and learning, where knowledge was
passed on from one generation to the next. In this way, young people learned the skills necessary for survival as well as the philosophy, teachings, and values.

According to Peacock and Wisuri (2002), the purposes of traditional Ojibwe education “were both to serve the practical needs of the people (to gain life skills) and to enhance the soul (to grow in spiritual ways). Together, these were part of the balance on one’s journey on the path of life…one of gentleness, humbleness, and respect” (p. 68). The basic values, teachings, and philosophy central to Ojibwe ways of knowing and being have remained.

Linda Grover (1999) provides a comprehensive description of traditional Ojibwe educational philosophy and methods, which to this day continue to emphasize the role of extended families and elders. She further notes how this holistic, multigenerational approach to education was perhaps not apparent, and definitely not acknowledged or validated by the first missionaries and fur traders in this region. Traditional methods of education were suddenly and violently displaced with the coming of the chi-mookomaan, the Ojibwe name for white man, which means “long knife.”

**Early Colonial Period**

From the moment of European invasion, indigenous nations became threatened, many to the point of extinction. Zinn (1997) describes with chilling detail many atrocities committed by America’s founding fathers in the name of “progress.” War, massacre, slavery, exploitation, and disease reduced indigenous populations in North America from perhaps as many as 25 million to less than one million (Zinn, 1997, p. 14). European power, control, and domination permeated all levels of societal interactions between the colonizers and the colonized. For those who survived
systematic annihilation, missionaries and governmental policies of forced assimilation
further systematically eroded indigenous cultures. Traditional ways of being, learning,
and knowing were replaced by foreign educational systems (along with Western
ideology) imposed by missionaries and mandated by governmental policies attempting
to “civilize and educate the red man” (Danziger, 1990, p. 105).

As early as 1568, Jesuits established mission schools in Florida in efforts to
convert “heathen” indigenous peoples to Christianity. Catholic and protestant religious
groups “dominated non-Indian attempts to educate Indian children for the next three
hundred years” (Reyhner, 1992, p. 35). Both religious and government-run mission
schools were set up on reservations, designed to devalue traditional ways and forcibly
assimilate native children into the dominant society.

During the treaty period between 1778 and 1871, the United States further
strengthened European-dominated systems of control. Congress seized exclusive power
to regulate Indian affairs through the formal treaty process, which resulted in large land
cessions and the creation of many reservations. Of nearly 400 treaties made during this
period, 120 contained educational provisions (Reyhner, 1992, p. 37).

Through what is now called “ethnic cleansing,” further erosion of indigenous
sovereignty and displacement of traditional ways of life came with the implementation
of the President Jackson’s 1830 Indian Removal Act. This act initiated forced removal
of indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands in the east to territory west of the
Mississippi, to clear the way for white occupancy “for the opening of the vast American
lands to…the development of the modern capitalist economy” (Zinn, 2002, p. 98).
Throughout the removal period, thousands of men, women, and children endured immeasurable suffering and death. When earlier efforts to remove the Lake Superior Ojibwe from what is now Wisconsin and Michigan failed, in 1850 federal officials used collusion and deceit by moving the site of the annual annuity payments from LaPointe (Madeline Island) in Wisconsin to Sandy Lake in northeastern Minnesota. Over 400 Ojibwe men, women, and children died from exposure, starvation, and disease (Peacock & Wisuri, 2002). Advocates of the removal policy “hoped that it would be the initial step toward the eventual assimilation of the Indians” (Satz, 2002, p. 129). The devastating effects of removal and confinement to reservations contributed to “a demoralizing situation of dependency developed on some reservations that continues to this day” (Reyhner, 1992, p. 47).

**Boarding Schools**

Just prior to the establishment of boarding schools, a series of government policies documents the pervasive ethnocentric attitudes among the dominant society in relation to mission schools on reservations. The 1868 Indian Peace Commission Report called for cultural and linguistic genocide:

> Through sameness of language is produced sameness of sentiment, and thought; customs and habits are molded and assimilated in the same way, and thus in process of time the differences producing trouble would have been gradually obliterated…In the difference of language today lies two-thirds of our trouble…Schools should be established which children should be required to attend; their barbarous dialect should be blotted out and the English language substituted. (cited in Reyhner, 1992, p. 41)
In 1880, the Indian Bureau issued English-only regulations: “that ‘all instruction must be in English’ in both mission and government schools under threat of loss of government funding” (cited in Reyhner, 1992, p. 41). In 1887, Commissioner of Indian Affairs J.D.C. Aitkins issued a report recommending exclusive instruction in English:

The Instruction of the Indian in the vernacular is not only of no use to them, but is detrimental to the cause of their education and civilization…and it will not be permitted in any Indian school over which the Government has any control…The first step to be taken toward civilization, toward teaching the Indians the mischief and folly of continuing in their barbarous practices, is to teach them the English language. (cited in Littlebear, 1995, p. 17)

Thus, the foundation and rationale for boarding schools was laid—to further remove the “savage” from the Indian. In 1879, the first off-reservation government-run boarding school was established at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, under the direction of Capt. Richard Henry Pratt. Patterned after his previous military experience with “civilizing” Apache, Cheyenne, Comanche, and Kiowa prisoners of war who were incarcerated at Fort Marion in Florida, the first off-reservation boarding schools were “designed to remove their students from their homes and tribal cultures for extended periods of time so that they could be instilled with American values, culture, and aspirations” (Child, 1999, p. 5).

Linda Grover’s (1999) study on the effects of boarding schools on Ojibwe people contains powerful testimonies about the horrific experiences suffered by boarding school students and the impact of these experiences on their lives and
subsequent generations. It is not surprising that a major finding in her study of boarding schools was the devastating impact on traditional language and culture.

**Early Educational Reform Efforts**

At the turn of the 20th century, more and more native children were placed in public schools. By 1912, more Indian children were attending public schools than government schools. The Bureau of Indian Affairs became the target of increasing public criticism, led by “reformers” such as John Collier and Lewis Meriam. The 1928 Meriam Report condemned the allotment system, the real beneficiaries of which were white speculators who swindled thousands of acres of land from Indians (Satz, 2002, p. 109). The Meriam Report also criticized the shocking conditions of boarding schools and recommended not sending elementary-age children to boarding schools at all (Reyner, 1992, p. 50). The Meriam Report confirmed complaints Indian families and students had been making for years (Child, 1999, p. 42), yet their voices were unheard by those in power until legitimized by federal government officials through this document. The Meriam Report introduced a more humanistic approach to educating native children, “though the goal of this approach was still assimilation” (Yazzie, 2000, p. 6).

In 1933, John Collier became the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He sought to implement the recommendations of the Meriam Report, which resulted in the enactment of the 1934 Indian Reorganization (Wheeler-Howard) Act (Reyhner, 1992). While this act put an end to allotment, many view it as still another form of oppression resulting in Western-imposed governance systems based on Western thought (Alfred, 1999).
Another effort at reform in 1934 was the passage of the Johnson-O’Malley Act, authorizing federal funding to pay states for educating native children in public schools. Not surprisingly, the funds originally went into coffers of public school general operating funds and were not specifically targeted for programs designed to provide culturally relevant education for native students. Reyhner (1992) notes that today the Johnson-O’Malley Act provisions require involvement and approval of Indian parent advisory committees in the design and implementation of programs and services created to meet the educational and cultural needs of Indian children. However, 70 years after the passage of this act, disparities still exist between the curriculum and the needs of native students.

**Termination and Relocation**

In 1953, the federal government initiated legislation to sever federal trust responsibility under the guise of freeing Indian tribes “from Federal supervision and control and from all disabilities and limitations specially applicable to Indians” (HRC 108, cited in Wilkins, 2002, p. 21). Over 100 tribes lost their federal recognition status. As part of termination, states were to assume responsibility for Indian education through the public school system (Reyhner, 1992). Another dismal failure, termination caused great economic and political hardships as well as further educational disparities. Although termination efforts ended in the mid-1960s, the policy was not officially rejected by Congress until 1988. Some tribes, such as the Menominee of Wisconsin, struggled for years before their legal status as Indians was restored in 1973 (Wilkins, 2002).
Hand in hand with termination, a type of removal called the relocation policy was instituted in the 1950s to “relocate” indigenous peoples from reservations to urban areas in efforts to further assimilate native people into the dominant society. The idea behind relocation was to remove American Indians from reservations and provide them with vocational education so that they would become “self-sufficient” citizens, but only in low-paying positions such as beauticians and manual laborers.

Another assimilationist legislative development in the 1950s included the creation of Impact Aid, which authorized federal funds for public schools. Federal trust lands on reservations were and still are exempt from state and local taxation. This legislation was designed to provide funds directly, in lieu of tax revenues, to public schools that serve native children living on reservation land (Rehyner, 1992). To be eligible for Impact Aid dollars, schools are required to provide evidence of support from tribal governments, in the form of a signature from an authorized tribal official, usually the tribal chairperson. Schools are also required to involve Indian parents in the form of public hearings; however, in reality actual participation in the process is often limited. This lack of participation is described by Benham (1998) as “the silence of the colonized mind” (p. xvi).

**Self-Determination**

The social movement of the 1960s and 1970s increased public consciousness about equality, equity, and social justice for all marginalized peoples in society. A new way of thinking emerged among indigenous peoples throughout the world. In New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and the United States, “the rise of indigenous activism
paralleled the activism surrounding the civil rights movement, women’s liberation, student uprisings, and the anti-Vietnam War movement” (Smith, 2000, p. 113).

Though indigenous peoples throughout the United States were painfully aware of the continuing struggles and disparities faced by native students in mainstream educational systems, heightened public awareness led to two national studies of Indian education. First, the National Study of American Indian Education was conducted during 1967-71 by Havighurst and it confirmed these educational disparities (Reyhner, 1992). The second national study on Indian education resulted in the 1969 Kennedy Report, titled Indian Education: A National Tragedy, A National Challenge. Reyhner (1992) describes the major findings:

In this report, Senator Edward Kennedy wrote that Indian dropout rates were twice the national average, Indian students lagged two to three years behind white students in school achievement, only one percent had Indian teachers, one-fourth of teachers of Indian students preferred not to teach them, and that “Indian children more than any other minority group believe themselves to be below average in intelligence.” (Reyhner, 1992, p. 55)

In 1970, President Richard Nixon issued a policy statement declaring that “tribal self-determination would be the goal” of his administration (Wilkins, 2002, p. 116). Congress responded by enacting a litany of laws reflective of the self-determination mode, several of which directly impacted Indian education.

This new policy of self-determination, along with the Kennedy Report, led to the passage of the 1972 Indian Education Act (also known as Title IV), which provided
funding for the development of Indian education programs in schools in order to better meet the needs of Indian students. Potentially, the most significant element of this legislation is the space it created for empowering native parents in determining community needs, priorities, and solutions; however, many issues remain (Peacock & Wisuri, 2002).

The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 was perhaps the most comprehensive and far-reaching in terms of federal recognition of sovereignty, including a variety of efforts to restore and revitalize Native languages and cultures through the schools (Lipka, 2002).

With the passage of the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, indigenous peoples were “allowed” to practice spirituality without fear of arrest and imprisonment. For the first time in recent history (the past 200 years), the federal government policy recognized native spiritual belief systems as being an integral part of indigenous culture (P.L. 95-341, 42 U.S.C. 1996). A subsequent amendment to the Indian Religious Freedom Act in 1994 reaffirmed these inherent rights, as did President Clinton’s executive order in 2000 on consultation with Indian tribal governments.

Renaissance

During the late 1980s, self-determination evolved for some tribes into a policy of self-governance, a concept which was initiated by several tribes who collectively sought to reclaim more decision-making authority in managing tribal affairs. According to Wilkins (2002), in 1988 tribal leaders urged the federal government to adopt this expansion of self-determination to a self-governance framework, issuing to Congress the following statement:
Self-Governance is fundamentally designed to provide Tribal governments with control and decision-making authority over the Federal financial resources provided for the benefit of Indian people...[it] fosters the shaping of a “new partnership” between Indian Tribes and the United States in their government-to-government relationships...Self-Governance is about change through the transfer of Federal funding available for programs, services, functions, and activities to Tribal control. Tribes are accountable to their own people for resource management, service delivery, and development. (cited in Wilkins, 2002, p. 117)

Individual tribes (30 as of 1995) who have formally adopted self-governance may have a greater degree of autonomy in the design and implementation of health, education, and social services for their people (Wilkins, 2002). The implications for language and culture preservation are many, with tribes having more control over their own destiny.

In 1990, the Native American Languages Act formally acknowledged the federal government’s role in suppression of indigenous languages, stating the current policy of the United States is to “preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages” (P.L. 101-477, 25 U.S.C. 2901). This legislation included provisions for supporting the use of native languages as a medium of instruction in schools; however, it did not authorize new programs or funds for existing ones. This bill was amended in 2001 to provide support for Native American language survival schools. Senator Daniel Inouye recently
introduced a new amendment, Senate Bill 575, which encourages a variety of language revitalization efforts, including support for the creation of language nests.

During 1990-91, the national Indian Nations At Risk Task Force conducted research, involving native voices throughout Indian country, to “review current conditions in Native American education and set forth rationale, plans, and strategies for action” (Charleston & King, 1991, p. 1). Their collective work resulted in identifying national goals for Indian education and prioritizing indigenous language, culture, and academic achievement among native children. Parents, tribes, schools, and governments all share in this responsibility (Demmert, 1994).

During the past 30 years, other significant factors impacting Indian education have been the growth of tribal colleges and universities, as well as the increasing movement toward tribally operated early childhood programs and K-12 schools. A recent study on Native American language immersion programs found immersion activities in 50 locations across the nation (Pease-Pretty On Top, 2003). The shift from assimilationist thinking to reclaiming indigenous ways of being has created this space for transmission of indigenous knowledge to occur.

Thus far this review of literature has examined how our language and culture has been taken away. The remaining sections of this literature review deal with how we get it back.

**Language Acquisition**

How do we learn language? As Bloomfield said in 1933: “A child cries out at birth and would doubtless in any case after a time take to gurgling and babbling, but the
particular language [s]he learns is entirely a matter of environment…The child learns to speak like the persons around him” (cited in Morgan, 1996, p. 556).

It is commonly known that the best time to learn language is during early childhood. According to Morgan (1996), Bloomfield’s observations form a part of the foundation for every theory of language acquisition. Theory and research have confirmed what parents have known since humans came into existence. Still, a brief examination of language acquisition is useful in the context of this study.

Through my experience as an early childhood administrator for the past ten years, I have observed an explosion of new research on brain development as it relates to early childhood education. Much of the brain research, influenced by Piaget’s theory of cognitive development and learning, deals with developmental stages, or “critical periods” in development, which have been described using terminology such as “windows of opportunities” (Puckett et al, 1999), “time windows” (Rovee-Collier, 1995), and “windows of learning” (Slegers, 1997). These critical periods occur in phases from birth to age 12, when the brain is most actively learning, like a super-sponge (Slegers, 1997, p. 11).

According to Slegers (1997), the foundations for thinking, vision, language, attitudes, aptitudes, and other characteristics are laid during this period. A corresponding neurological discussion for this phenomenon in terms of dendrites, plasticity, synapses, and the like are well beyond the scope of this study. Yet, the concept of windows of opportunity for learning makes sense. For example, Slegers identified the window for vision as being two to four months, while the window for math and logic is birth to four years. She points to the window, or optimum time, for
language development as being birth to ten years, confirming why adults have a more
difficult time learning language than children. The concept of time windows supports
the conclusion that language immersion experiences should begin at an early age.

DeHouwer (1999), in his study of learning two or more languages in early
childhood, also refers to the most ideal time for language development to occur as being
between birth and age ten. He further challenges some common myths in language
acquisition, finding:

• Hearing two or more languages in childhood is not a cause of language disorder or
  language delay.
• Children’s use of two languages within one sentence is not a sign of confusion.
• Children do not just “pick up” a language; they need a strongly supportive and rich
  environment (DeHouwer, 1999, pp. 2-3).

Dispelling common misconceptions such as these can help to counter hegemonic
forces that have served to perpetuate dominant ways of thinking. Cantoni (1996) refers
to the common misconception held within mainstream education that learning more
than one language could delay a child’s development, revealing an underlying belief
that English is more valuable than an indigenous language. Indeed, during the early part
of the 20th century, “researchers came to the conclusion that bilingualism caused
cognitive problems and language handicaps” (Cantoni, 1996, p. 2). The tragic fact that
generations of native parents did not speak their indigenous language to their children,
attempting to protect their children from the often severe punishment they received,
demonstrates how native people were forced to accept this assimilationist agenda.
Rather than causing delays, Cantoni (1997) points to many studies over the past 40
years, one as early as 1962 by Peal and Lambert, which demonstrate that bilingual children show a cognitive advantage.

Demmert (1994) discussed the findings of the 1991 Indian Nations at Risk task force, regarding native language, culture, and academic achievement:

- Learning more than one language does not retard English language development.
- Children can learn more than one language simultaneously and understand the differences.
- Learning languages in addition to English can actually enhance academic performance.
- Developing a strong language and cultural base is strongly and positively related to high academic achievement.

In a more recent review of the research literature on culturally based education, Demmert and Towner (2003), cite numerous quantitative and qualitative studies that confirm a positive relationship between culturally based education and improved academic performance among Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children. Also, in her recent study on Native American language immersion, Janine Pease-Pretty On Top (2003) found that students in native language immersion schools consistently demonstrate greater academic achievement. Specifically, she cites studies of Navajo, Blackfeet, Assiniboine, Hawaiian, and Maori language immersion schools where students have shown a positive correlation between language learning and higher academic achievement.

An examination of how we learn language, along with the impact of language acquisition on child development and learning, may serve to facilitate collaborative
efforts of tribes, parents, and educators to devise strategies to promote and strengthen indigenous language revitalization within their communities. Next I will examine models of successful language and culture revitalization in five indigenous communities.

**Successful Models of Language and Culture Revitalization**

Growing efforts to save indigenous languages and cultures are evident throughout the world. Based largely on synthesizing information presented by language activists, scholars, and educators at the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages symposiums, Reyhner (1999) offered strategies on what communities can do to strengthen indigenous languages at each of Fishman’s stages of language loss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Current Language Status</strong></th>
<th><strong>Suggested Intervention Strategies</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage eight: Only a few elders speak the language.</td>
<td>Use an apprentice model, teaming elders with young adults (Hinton, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage seven: Only adults beyond child-bearing age still speak the language.</td>
<td>Establish “language nests” like the Maori and Hawaiian models, where fluent older adults provide preschool childcare in an immersion setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage six: Still some intergenerational use of the language in the homes</td>
<td>Identify and nurture places in the community where the language is encouraged, protected, and used exclusively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage five: The language is still very much alive and used in the community</td>
<td>Offer literacy in the indigenous language. Promote voluntary language programs in the schools and throughout the community. Special recognition through awards, improving prestige, and use of language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage four: The language is required in elementary schools.</td>
<td>Improve instructional methods using a variety of immersion techniques; teach reading, writing, and higher level skills in the language; develop indigenous textbooks, curriculum, and materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage three: Language is used in places of business, among employees.</td>
<td>Make it the language of work throughout the community; develop vocabulary to enable employees to do their day-to-day work using the language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage two: Language is used by local government offices/mass media.</td>
<td>Promote use of written language for government and business functions; promote indigenous language newspapers, radios, and television stations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage one: Higher levels of tribal government and higher education use the language.</td>
<td>Teach at tribal colleges and universities using the language as the medium of instruction; develop oral and written literature; give tribal/national awards for indigenous language publications.</td>
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A vision for language and culture revitalization could benefit from consideration of theories of language loss, along with strategies on how to overcome this language shift. In addition, an exploration of communities who have created successful language and culture revitalization movements has great potential for informing other communities who want to begin or strengthen their efforts. As noted earlier, there are currently 50 active immersion sites in the United States alone (Pease-Pretty On Top, 2003). While each community is unique, much can be learned from the experience of others, potentially preventing at least to some extent “reinventing the wheel” (Cantoni, 1996).

Peacock and Day (1999) looked at several communities with varying degrees of success in their language revival efforts, including the Cree (Quebec), Hualapai, (Arizona), Hawaiian, Arapaho (Wyoming), Pasqua (Arizona), Inuttitut (Arctic Quebec), and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw. They found these six groups shared five common characteristics, emphasizing the critical importance of the first characteristic:
• Acknowledging that the language is important enough to save in perpetuity. While many tribes say they support preserving their languages, far fewer have actually taken steps to begin the process. **Political, community, and school leaders from all six of the aforementioned tribes have strongly acknowledged the need to preserve their languages for the benefit of tribal members** (emphasis added).

• Immersion. All six tribes provided immersion experiences, allowing people to be immersed exclusively in their language, away from English.

• Literacy programs. Developing the ability to read and write a language helps the language to become permanent.

• Community input and assistance. If parents and community do not support their children learning the language, along with the culture embedded in the language, success will be difficult. Leadership for successful preservation efforts must emerge from within the community.

• Language programs in the schools. In as much as the educational system (boarding schools) played such a powerful role in the decline of native languages, schools can also play a powerful role in restoring languages. Successful models have trained and motivated native language teachers and developed curriculum that combines language and cultural instruction. (Peacock & Day, 1999)

  Stiles (1997) had similar findings when she examined four successful indigenous language programs. She compared the Cree (Quebec), Hualapai (Arizona), Maori (New Zealand), and Hawaiian indigenous language programs, and described common components, problems, and outcomes:
• Each program has an integral link of language and culture immersion. These communities successfully created spaces where children were able to immerse themselves in their tribal languages and cultural teachings.

• Each tribe invested considerable resources (time, energy, funds) to develop culturally based curriculum material specific to their tribe.

• Each community stressed the importance of community, parent, and tribal government support. External forces, coupled with internal forces, resulted in strong initial resistance within these communities, yet the tenacity of language advocates eventually led to widespread community support.

• Common problems in these programs include teacher availability, teacher training/certification, lack of fluent teachers, and funding.

• Significant outcomes in each community include a “revaluing of education” and learning at all levels (as evidenced by increased student success), increased pride and identity, and rejuvenation of their endangered indigenous language (Stiles, 1997).

Janine Pease-Pretty On Top (2003) extends these findings in her recent study of language immersion programs in the United States. Of the 50 immersion sites (schools, camps, retreats) located, she reviewed ten language immersion schools. All were characterized by native ways of knowing and learning, and demonstrated compelling reasons for immersion, such as: present and future vitality of the tribal nation through language restoration, improved educational achievement and student retention, greater cultural and language preservation efforts that rebuild the native community, larger societal benefits through native perspectives, and potential to allay centuries-old
subjugation of native people (Pease-Pretty On Top, 2003). Through her extensive
review of immersion sites, several principles of Native American language immersion emerged:

- Tribal nations’ language authorities or commissions officially recognize the urgent
  and critical nature of their tribal language.
- Tribal community members and elders, including fluent speakers, involved in a
careful, thoughtful, and long-term planning process.
- Intensive culturally based programs provide opportunities for students to learn
traditional knowledge, skills, arts, and academic subjects, using the native language
exclusively as the medium of instruction.
- Instructors and resource people in the classroom have an extraordinary commitment
to language revitalization and are fluent in the language.
- Educators/instructors and activists come from varied backgrounds; most are tribal
members with language fluency.
- Programming is uniquely planned and creatively implemented.
- Master/apprentice experiences develop language and cultural leadership within the
community.
- Tribal colleges and universities play a key role.
- Low student-teacher ratio of five or six students to one teacher promotes maximum
learning impact.
- Immersion funding varies dramatically and is problematic, (Pease-Pretty On Top,
2003)

Today it is common to hear indigenous peoples proclaim they want to preserve,
protect, and revitalize the language. It is much less common to see effective models really working. David DeJong (1998) examined a variety of language learning strategies, including bilingual education and partial immersion; in both of these approaches children are taught using two languages at the same time in the same classroom. DeJong refers to extensive research demonstrating that these methods have been ineffective, and found total immersion to be the most effective way of learning a second language (1998, p. 5). Total immersion is a method of language learning and teaching in which the individual receives all instruction in the target language, the primary goal being to produce natural speakers. Citing previous studies, including the work of Christian (1976) and Cowley (1997), he provides further evidence that immersion is most effective when it is implemented among 18 to 30 month old children, when children’s learning abilities explode (DeJong, 1998, p. 6).

In reviewing theories of language acquisition, coupled with a review of language and culture revitalization efforts around the globe, I have selected five indigenous immersion models to explore more in depth for this study: the Maori (New Zealand), Hawaiian, Blackfeet (Montana), Arapaho (Wyoming), and the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe (Wisconsin). These communities were chosen primarily because they have demonstrated success in revitalizing their languages and cultures, as recognized by indigenous communities as well as educators and scholars. A secondary consideration, though I suspect a significant factor in their efforts, was that these communities began immersion with very young children.

Maori
The Maori people of Aotearoa (New Zealand) have a complex history of colonization and oppression that parallels ours in many ways: European invasion, genocide through war and disease, forced removal from ancestral lands, and forced assimilation sanctioned by the government and missionaries (Smith, 2001). The long-term effects of repressive government and educational policies took a severe toll on Maori language and their way of life. By 1979, many Maori feared their language would become extinct: “the Maori language had retreated to the point where it was thought it would die out” (Ranginui Walker, 1990, p. 147). These factors contributed to the creation of Te Kohanga Reo, or language nests. Initially designed to restore the Maori language through total immersion in early childhood settings, the role of elders fluent in the Maori language was critical in the development and implementation.

The development of Te Kohanga Reo emerged during the social movement of the 1960s and 1970s, when Maori began challenging assimilationist and paternalistic educational, political, health, and other social structures of the larger Paheka (white) society (Simon & Smith, 2001). Increased Maori activism across multiple sites led to rising consciousness, struggle, and mobilization of the indigenous community.

Dissatisfied and disillusioned with the mainstream educational system which perpetuated dominant interests, the first Te Kohanga Reo was opened in 1982, yet “what began as an initiative to support the regeneration of te reo Maori [the Maori language]…had been transformed into something entirely different from that which had been initially imagined” (Simon & Smith, 2001, p. 309). By 1996 there were 767 Te Kohanga Reo centers. Early success with the language nests led to subsequent development of Kura Kaupapa (primary/elementary), Wharekura (secondary), and
Wananga (tertiary/post-secondary) initiatives, all controlled, defined, validated, and legitimized by and for Maori (Durie, 1998).

According to Linda Smith (2001), a “purposeful dream has been conceptualized” around key organizing principles, such as Te Reo (Maori language), Tikanga Maori (Maori cultural customs and beliefs), whanau, hapu, iwi (extended family, sub-tribal groupings, and tribe), and tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty). These concepts, which are “embedded in the Maori language and world view, provided a way of coming together on Maori terms” (p. 109).

The idea was to provide a total immersion environment within a Maori philosophical orientation and curricular framework. Thus, kaupapa (philosophy) central to Te Kohanga Reo was summarized by Johnston (1994) and May (1998) as follows:

- Children will learn the Maori language and culture, including the spiritual dimension through total immersion.
- Language and cultural learning will be fostered and supported among all members of the Kohanga Reo whanau (extended family).
- Members of the Kohanga Reo whanau will learn a range of other skills (for example, administration) in the whanau setting.
- Collective responsibility for the administration and operations of the Kohanga Reo will be fostered through whanau development.
- All involved will be helped to feel the sense of being accepted and belonging which is crucial for their empowerment.
- The content, context, and control of learning will be Maori. (Johnston, 1994; May, 1998)
The Te Kohanga Reo movement has proven to be a phenomenal success in many respects. A renewed optimism and strength of the people along with the increased vitality of the Maori language and culture is evident. According to King (2001), by the mid-1970s the number of fluent speakers had declined to 18-20% of the total Maori population, virtually all of whom were over the age of 50. By 1996, nearly 60% of Maori had varying levels of proficiency, with 29% indicating that they knew enough of the language to be able to hold an everyday conversation (King, 2001).

The success of the movement in creating a new generation of native Maori speakers who embrace, seek, and affirm Maori knowledge has permeated many levels of Maori society. The Maori people have been an inspiration to language revitalization efforts throughout the world. As I see it, the strength of the model lies in its emergence from and continued involvement with the entire community and the strong linkage of Maori language to Maori culture.

Hawaiian

During the past 20 years, the reemergence of Hawaiian voice in education accompanied larger efforts to transform Hawaiian society from a colonized mindset into one that reclaimed and demanded self-determination. Benham and Heck (1998) provided a comprehensive critical assessment of Native Hawaiian education, focusing on the historical, political, and cultural contexts that were institutionalized and perpetuated through the dominant educational system. They noted increasing activism in the 1980s and 1990s “led to the creation of Hawaiian language immersion schools” (Benham & Heck, 1998, p. 23). Warner (2001) describes this period of “political and cultural renaissance which has resulted in the movement to revitalize the Hawaiian
language through immersion education” (p. 133). Warner adds that a state survey, conducted in 1978, found only 2000 Hawaiian native speakers remained.

Wilson and Kamana (1996, 2001) discuss their personal interest and grassroots involvement in the Hawaiian language revitalization movement, beginning with the birth of their first child in 1981. They refer to a study conducted that same year by Richard Benton, which “predicted that Hawaiian would be the first Polynesian language to be totally replaced by a European language” (Wilson & Kamana, 2001, p. 148). Encouraged by the news of the Maori language nest preschools in New Zealand, along with a small group of educators and parents, they came together to create similar preschools, Punana Leo, meaning “language nest,” where only Hawaiian would be spoken. The first Punana Leo opened in 1984; by 1999, 11 language nests served over 200 children, with hundreds more on waiting lists (Warner, 2001).

In order for children from the Puana Leo preschools to maintain their Hawaiian language ability, subsequent immersion initiatives were necessary, including the 1987 development of elementary and intermediate immersion schools. In 1992 the Hawaiian language immersion program had extended to the high school level (Benham, 1998). By 1999, the total enrollment in K-12 immersion programs had grown to 1,543 students (Warner, 2001). Throughout these immersion settings, the Hawaiian language is used exclusively, except that beginning in the fifth grade, English instruction is introduced but is limited to one hour per day through grade 12 (Warner, 2001). Wilson and Kamana (2001) note that Hawaiian as the medium of instruction now extends through graduate school, and emphasize how linkages with the University of Hawaii, through advocacy, teacher training, and curriculum development, have played a key role in the
overall Hawaiian immersion movement. During the annual 2003 Native Language Preservation Conference that I was fortunately able to attend, Stephen Greymorning indicated that Hawaii is producing 100 fluent speakers each year.

Wilson and Kamana (2001) attribute the success of the Hawaiian movement to the underlying philosophy of “strengthening of the Hawaiian mauli, or life force, which allows for the continued existence of a Hawaiian people” (Wilson & Kamana, 2001, p. 147). Thus, the Hawaiian language is viewed as one aspect of cultural continuity and identity described as mauli.

According to Wilson and Kamana (1996), the original concept of the Puanao Leo language nest was “to create an environment where Hawaiian language and culture were conveyed and developed in much the same way that they were in the home in earlier generations” (p. 151). They presented the idea of the language nest to others, not in terms of a school, but as a means to revitalize the language, by recreating traditional extended-family arrangements and interactions through the Hawaiian language and culture. This emphasis on family orientation was further reinforced by requiring family participation (Wilson & Kamana, 2001). Parents must pay tuition (based on income), provide eight hours of in-kind volunteer service per month, attend weekly Hawaiian language lessons, and attend monthly governance meetings (Wilson & Kamana, 1996).

Their research on early childhood development and education resulted in the Punana Leo incorporating features of the Montessori methodology as they developed their own culturally based curriculum and environment (Wilson & Kamana, 2001). The Montessori methodology emphasizes learning as a process of discovery, through all five senses, by creating environments designed to foster “spiritual, emotional, physical, and
intellectual growth – as members of a family, the world community and the Cosmos” (International Montessori Index, 2003). From the first day a child enters the Puana Leo, only the Hawaiian language is used, in conjunction with the mauli-oriented world view. Wilson & Kamana (2001) go on to describe a typical Punana Leo day, beginning when parents drop off their children, which is followed by a morning circle when children participate in traditional singing, listening to stories, exercising, learning to introduce themselves in the formal Hawaiian way, talking about the day, or participating in some other activity. Next is free time where children interact with different materials to learn about textures, colors, sizes, and so forth. Then comes large and small group activities, which may include prereading and premath skills. This is followed by outdoor play, lunch, nap, storytime, a snack, and a second circle. The typical day ends with outdoor play until parents pick up the children (Wilson & Kamana, 2001). Multi-age grouping provides peer-motivated language learning. Usually within three to four months, children without prior Hawaiian language experience can and do use only Hawaiian.

All this is happening despite Benton’s grim prediction in 1981 that “Hawaiian is in a much better position than many other Polynesian languages which are being replaced by English, French, and Spanish” (Wilson & Kamana, 2001, p. 148). Hinton concluded that “of all indigenous languages to what is now the United States, Hawaiian represents the flagship of language recovery, and serves as a model and a symbol of hope to other endangered languages” (Hinton, 2001, p. 131).

**Pikuni (Blackfeet)**

Like so many other indigenous nations in the United States, the severity of loss of the Blackfeet language was critical by the 1980s. A 1985 survey of Blackfeet
members indicated that no one on the reservation under the age of 50 spoke the Blackfeet language (Piegan Institute Web site, 2003). This served as a wake-up call to the Blackfeet people and led to the creation of the Piegan Institute, a non-profit community-based organization designed to promote and preserve Blackfeet language and culture.

In 1994, members of the Piegan Institute, along with other Blackfeet tribal members, traveled to Hawaii in search of a way to start an immersion program on their own reservation in Montana. Their visit marked the beginning of a new alliance, a partnership between the Blackfeet and the Hawaiian people. Darrell Kipp, co-founder of the Piegan Institute recalled: “They were the first people we ever met who knew what we were seeking, and they shared everything they knew with us…they were our mentors, our support, and our guides” (Kipp, 2000, p. ). Within one year, the Piegan Institute designed and built a new facility, the Nizhipuhwahsin Center, and began its first immersion effort with a preschool program modeled after the Hawaiian language nests, called the Moccasin Flat immersion school (Still Smoking, 1997).

Today, the Piegan Institute oversees three immersion programs. Due to increasing demand for immersion experiences, the Cut Wood immersion school was created in 1997 and the Lost Child immersion school opened in 2002, serving children from kindergarten through grade eight. Strong support from Blackfeet elders and the formation of community partnerships, particularly with the Blackfeet Community College, have facilitated these expansion efforts (Piegan Institute Web site, 2003).

When they started the Piegan Institute, there was no one around that could speak the language, so they called upon their Blackfeet relatives from Canada to teach both
children in the school and adults who had to relearn the language as quickly as possible (Kipp, 2000).

Dorothy Still Smoking (1997), co-founder of the Piegan Institute, conducted an extensive study, through interviews with Blackfeet elders, concerning their perceptions of what constitutes the traditional Blackfeet knowledge base, and how the elders believe traditional knowledge should be passed on. Still Smoking describes the areas of importance, as defined by elders: Blackfeet ways of life; family relationships; naming; ceremonies; respecting and restoring the language; reflections on formal school experiences of the elders; and the role of the language in transferring Blackfeet knowledge and culture (Still Smoking, 1997). According to Kipp, this important study is used by the Piegan Institute as the “basis for program development and the creation of learning materials” (Piegan Institute Web site, 2003).

With great wit and humor, Kipp (2000) offered some valuable words of wisdom in “Encouragement, Guidance, Insights, and Lessons Learned for Native Language Activists Developing Their Own Tribal Language Programs.” Kipp discusses five basic rules for developing a language revitalization program:

- Rule 1: Never ask permission; never beg to save the language. Find the ones who want it, and work with them.
- Rule 2: Never debate the issues. Never disgrace our language with debate – it will de-energize you. The language is powerful; they will come around to you.
- Rule 3: Be very action oriented; just act. If you don’t have land, money, or a building, figure out how to make it happen.
• Rule 4: Show, don’t tell. Don’t talk about what you will do, just do it and show it. The children will show your success. Put status back in the language. You need to pay 10 percent more than any school in the area so that your teachers feel proud to be there.

• Rule 5: Use your language as your curriculum – botany, geography, political science, philosophy, and history are all embedded in the language. The language is the key. The language will teach you. There is no other priority (Kipp, 2000, p. 1).

The Blackfeet immersion programs reflect the Hawaiian model in many respects.

Indeed, of all the international relationships the Hawaiians have with other indigenous peoples, the Piegan Institute’s Blackfeet Cut-Bank language immersion school is the one most developed along the lines similar to the Punana Leo (Wilson & Kamana, 2001). Naturally, there are some unique features, which I will discuss briefly.

In addition to the “no English” policy, the Blackfeet immersion programs now have a “no visitor” policy, even though admittedly this runs counter to the hospitality of traditional ways. Kipp maintained that this was necessary because people would “not adhere to our rule of no English spoken in the building” (Kipp, 2000, p. 65).

A second unique feature of the Piegan Institute is that it is not government funded at all; rather, it relies solely on foundations for financial support and has recently created an endowment to maintain financial stability. As Kipp explains: “We do not take money from the government. This means we don’t have to ask permission and we don’t have to jump through hoops…we believe that our language is alive and will take
care of us if we continue to be friends with those that go along with our beliefs…with no strings attached. If they want strings, we do not take it” (Kipp, 2000, p. 67).

Another distinctive aspect of the Blackfeet model not found in the Hawaiian model is the use of total physical response as a method for teaching and learning. According to Reyhner (2002), this technique was made popular by James Asher in the 1970s. Total physical response is an approach to immersion for beginning language learners, which takes into account the initial “silent period” in language learning by having learners respond physically to simple requests modeled by the teacher (Reyhner, 2002). Essentially, language is combined with action. Along with Kipp, other proponents of this technique include Richard Littlebear (1992), Leanne Hinton (2002), and Gina Cantoni (1999), among others.

For other tribes interested in pursuing a preschool immersion program, Kipp (2000) recommends starting with a small group of five or six children the same age, ideally four year olds. The next year, add the three year olds, because they will learn the language more quickly. Reflecting a heightened awareness of the dynamics of early childhood development based on firsthand experience, he cautioned: “If you don’t start with the four year olds, then the three year olds will try to dominate the four year olds, and you will have a mess on your hands” (Kipp, 2000, p. 30).

**Arapaho**

Like many other indigenous nations in the United States, members of the Northern Arapaho tribe of the Wind River reservation in Wyoming have expressed concern about the increasing rate of language loss, particularly during the past 40 years (Greymorning, 2001). As a result of pressure from the community to teach Arapaho
language within the public school system on the reservation, formal Arapaho language
instruction began in 1978; yet, due to the fact that language instruction occurred for
only 15 minutes per day, the impact on language learning was minimal (Greymorning,
1999).

Stephen Greymorning examined the growth and development of the Arapaho
language immersion program on the Wind River reservation and discussed language
revitalization strategies and methods for renewing efforts to establish a new generation
visit to the Hawaiian Punana Leo preschools in 1993, he recalled: “It was like
witnessing a miracle, and it was the inspiration of those children that I brought back
with me to try to instill within our own language program” (Greymorning, 1997, p. 12).

With support from parents of kindergarten-bound children, despite initial
resistance from school administrators, Arapaho immersion efforts began in 1993 with a
half-day immersion class at the kindergarten level in the Wyoming Indian Elementary
School in Ethete, Wyoming. Throughout the year, Greymorning conducted Arapaho
language assessments at regular intervals. By the end of the school year, he was able to
provide evidence that the immersion group students not only increased their Arapaho
vocabulary dramatically (compared to the non-immersion group), they also had a much
lower rate of absenteeism than their non-immersion peers (Greymorning, 1997). These
positive outcomes enabled him to make a strong case for continuation of the program.

Though they had the first immersion class in place, Greymorning realized a
multifaceted approach would be more effective, so they channeled efforts to begin an
immersion preschool (Greymorning, 1999). In 1994, they started a two-hour per day
immersion preschool class, which was expanded several months later to three hours per day. A year later, in 1995, they started the first full-day preschool language immersion class (Greymorning, 1997).

Part of the multifaceted approach included increased efforts to have the language seen and heard in as many places possible, such as street signs, radio, books, and videos, including the production of the video Bambi in the Arapaho language (Greymorning, 1999). Greymorning notes that as their language efforts intensified, so did the criticism from their own people (Greymorning, 1999). This phenomenon illustrates the destructive nature of suboppressive behavior common among native people (Cleary & Peacock, 1998).

Over the years since they began immersion, Greymorning (2001) identified an ongoing concern with finding fluent teachers with a true commitment to the “no English” philosophy of full immersion. Greymorning asserted that the only way for children to achieve fluency is to repeatedly and systematically expose them to a full array of speech forms and patterns. In spite of numerous discussions he had with Arapaho language teachers, when he visited classrooms “it was common for me to hear instructors speaking English” (Greymorning, 1997, p. 4). Greymorning reported it was even more difficult to find fluent teachers who could work well with young children (2001).

By 2001, due largely to Greymorning’s efforts, the Arapaho nation had created immersion opportunities at the preschool and kindergarten levels. Though the children were demonstrating remarkable increased speaking ability, according to Greymorning, they still were not producing fluent speakers (Greymorning, 2001). He identified the
need to go beyond teaching simple words and phrases, to passing on the ability to think and communicate in the language (Greymorning, 1997). He clarified his definition of fluency as follows: “If individuals think in a particular language and are capable of communicating their full range of thoughts in that language then those individuals are operating at a level of fluency” (Greymorning, 2001, p. 291). Thus, Greymorning asserted that a serious challenge to producing age-appropriate fluency among the children at the Arapaho immersion sites has been the lack of consistently applied immersion techniques (Greymorning, 2001).

Regarding the Arapaho immersion program, Hale (2001) points to several lessons that can be learned:

- Teaching a language takes time – that is, time out of each school day – and the educational structures in which a local language is to be taught must adjust to this circumstance.

- In order to achieve this result, there must be evidence, recognizable to the community, to support the immersion concept.

- The need for training and careful selection of those fluent speakers who will teach in immersion classes.

- The wisdom of promoting public events with local language content.

- The need to begin at an early age to guarantee the emergence of a population fluent in the local language.

- The possibility of novel and alternative sources of funding for language programs, for example, parents themselves as a funding source. (Hale, 2001, pp. 284-285)

**Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe**
The Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe, located in northern Wisconsin, near Hayward, has not been immune to the looming indigenous language crisis. Today it is estimated at the most 15 fluent speakers remain within a 100-mile radius of the reservation, with most speakers being over the age of 65 (Hermes, 2004).

In response to the language crisis, over the past two decades the people of Lac Courte Oreilles began working in formal and informal ways to rekindle the ways of the Ojibwe, resulting in the creation of:

- the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe School,
- numerous language camps and immersion events,
- a comprehensive study of language on the reservation,
- community circles, traditional community gatherings,
- the Lac Courte Oreilles Honor the Earth Traditional Pow-Wow,
- the Ojibwe Language Society,
- the Ojibwe Language Preservation Board, and
- the Lac Courte Oreilles Elders Project.

These community driven initiatives provided a strong foundation for further language revitalization strategies; indeed, “It is through their efforts that the impetus to create the immersion school was begun” (Immersion Preschool Funding Application, Department of Education, 2003).

Acting on their dream, “a small group of language activists and education oriented parents decided to work together to create the first ever Ojibwe language immersion school” (Hermes, 2004). Housed at the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College, in 1998 this handful of highly committed people (Mary Hermes,
Keller Paap, Ruth Carley, and Clara Bebe) started the first ever Ojibwe language pre-
school. With few local fluent speakers who would be able to teach children ages three
to five years old, their search for teachers began (Pease Pretty On Top, 2003).

Eventually, they found two Ojibwe speakers willing to help: one was Rose Tainter, an
elder from Red Lake, Minnesota but long time resident of Lac Courte Oreilles; the other
was William Wilson, a first language Ojibwe speaker from Manitoba who had already
been living in Lac Courte Oreilles.

By 2000, this first group of immersion children was ready to move on to
kindergarten. The same small group of highly committed language activists developed
an immersion kindergarten pilot program, funded through an Administration for Native
Americans (ANA) grant. Looking for ways to maintain longer-term immersion
programming, the leaders of the language movement approached the Hayward Public
School with the innovative idea of creating a charter school. Thus, in 2001, the Lac
Courte Oreille Ojibwe created an Ojibwe language K-3 immersion school, called
Waadookodadding, meaning the place where we help each other (Hermes, 2004). The
mission of the school captures their collective vision:

“The mission of the school is to create fluent speakers of the Ojibwe language
who are to meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world. The school is a
community center for language revitalization, local environmental
understanding
and intergenerational relationships. Students are expected to be grounded in
local
language, culture and traditions, while aware of global concerns. The aim is to
foster a love of learning while teaching the skills which will enable students to create solutions of our community and our planet” (Funding Application, Department of Education, 2003).

At the time of this writing, Waadoookodadding expanded to include children through the fourth grade. The hope is to continue growing, one grade at a time. Yet securing funding to continue and getting beyond the fighting is a constant struggle. Hermes (2004), courageously reflects on “the struggles to start the school and the complex layers of oppression the struggle unearths” (p. 1). She offers personal reflections on the “gut-wrenching start-up years”, much of which has been “about money, class privilege, and internalized racism” (p. 1). Yet, despite the apparent contradictions and challenges operating at many different levels, Hermes attests that “this work was and is an act of healing…we started a school to save the Ojibwe language within the very same place it was so violently damaged—public schools”.

I have had the great honor of visiting both the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe immersion pre-school and the K-4 charter school. One thing is certain…despite the challenges and barriers, the power of the language has pulled them together. They are actually doing what, at this point, my own community can only dream of. I will always be extremely grateful to the people from Lac Courte Oreilles, who have been so willing to share, for opening their hearts and minds, and for giving us renewed hope.

Summary

This review of literature included relevant works related to oppression and colonization, as this has profoundly impacted the language and culture of indigenous groups throughout the world. Theories of language loss were reviewed, as was the
literature on the historical context of American Indian education. Theories of language
acquisition were also explored. The chapter ended with a more in-depth examination of
five selected models of language and culture revitalization in indigenous communities.
All five communities initiated efforts to save the language and culture through creating
immersion sites that focus on transmission of knowledge beginning at an early age.
Much can be learned about preserving and maintaining the language and culture by
looking at these models.

Regarding the concept of language immersion, Darrell Kipp (2000) made a
fitting analogy—like the condor in California, “they captured all of them, and brought
them into a sanctuary. That’s what an immersion school is. It’s a sanctuary” (Kipp,
2000, p. 40).

I had the great honor of visiting with Maori elders, teachers, scholars, students,
and other community members during January of 2003. Hearing their many stories of
domination, struggle, and transformation was an incredibly powerful experience…one
to which I can attribute my realization…that it is truly possible to share a collective
vision and make such profound change.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study explores what young Ojibwe children (prenatal through age five) from the Red Cliff community might know, learn, and understand about their language and culture. This research may provide opportunities to strengthen native language and cultural development for young children. The process of doing the study has served to support and strengthen a growing movement in the Red Cliff community to revitalize traditional ways of being and knowing, to recapture the spirit of our ancestors by engaging in a collaborative dialogue with the community.

Role of the Researcher

At the outset of this research project, I identified myself as an Anishinaabe woman, born and raised on the Red Cliff reservation. Having seen the devastating effects of oppression in my community throughout my life, in recent years I have also witnessed a growing desire to reclaim and revitalize indigenous ways of being and knowing. I disclosed my personal agenda for doing this research, which was to contribute to this growing movement. Thus, this research has emerged out of the specific needs of my community, in which I clearly have a vested interest. While Creswell (2003) cautions against “backyard” research, I concur with Linda Smith’s position on indigenous research:

…it has been about understanding the ways in which research can provide systematic ways of understanding our own predicaments, of answering our own questions, and of helping us as communities to solve our problems and develop
ourselves…when indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of the research is transformed. (2001, p. 193)

I believe that knowing the community as well as I do gives me unique insights into the complex social, historical, political, educational, and cultural needs, issues, and dynamics operating within my community; it would be difficult, if not impossible, for an outsider to share this intimately unique perspective.

**Study Design**

Due to the nature of the research questions, a qualitative design is the most appropriate methodology for this study. Creswell (1994) defines a qualitative study as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants [participants], and conducted in a natural setting” (pp. 1-2). Within a qualitative study, researchers interact with those they study, rather than distancing themselves from whatever is being researched, as is the case in quantitative studies. According to Creswell, the qualitative researcher “tries to minimize the distance between him- or herself and those being researched…and…and…admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases, as well as the value nature of information gathered from the field” (1994, p. 6).

It is encouraging to see Creswell’s most recent work reflecting the need for alternative knowledge claims, epistemologies, or philosophical assumptions “about how researchers will learn about what they will learn during their inquiry” (Creswell, 2003, p. 6). Creswell’s recent inclusion of an emancipatory advocacy/participatory approach arose because existing research paradigms did not adequately reflect the needs and
issues of marginalized or oppressed peoples. Indeed, it is commonly known that, historically, indigenous peoples have been subjected to research by outsiders with their own agendas which have served to exploit and further oppress native people. Hermes (1997) speaks of the growing native-oriented ethic for doing research in our own native communities, where “the emphasis shifts from ‘research for research’s sake’…to research which serves some specific purpose or need of the community within which it is situated” (p. 2). Smith (2001) articulated the need for an indigenous research agenda with the goal of self-determination and social justice necessarily involving the “processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples” (p. 116). This study is aligned with an indigenous research framework, along with key features of the “new” advocacy or participatory approach, summarized by Creswell as follows:

- Participatory action is recursive or dialectical and is focused on bringing about change in practices. Thus, at the end of advocacy/participatory studies, researchers advance an action agenda for change.

- It is focused on helping individuals free themselves from constraints found in…the relationships of power in educational settings. Advocacy/participatory studies often begin with an important issue or stance about the problems in society, such as the need for empowerment.

- It is emancipatory in that it helps unshackle people from the constraints of irrational and unjust structures that limit self-development and self-determination. The aim of advocacy/participatory studies is to create a…discussion so that change will occur.
• It is practical and collaborative because it is inquiry completed “with” others rather than “on” or “to” others. In this spirit, advocacy/participatory authors engage the participants as active collaborators in their inquiries. (Creswell, 2003, p. 11)

**Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative research was the strategy of inquiry I used to explore what young Ojibwe children from the Red Cliff community might know, learn, and understand about their language and culture. Consistent with an indigenous research epistemology, and situated within a qualitative, advocacy/participatory approach, narrative research, as defined by Clandin and Connelly (2000) is:

> a form of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. This information is then retold or restored by the researcher into a narrative chronology. In the end, the narrative combines views from the participant’s life with those of the researcher’s life in a collaborative narrative. (cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 15)

Native people have relied on storytelling and the perspectives of elders for many generations. As Smith (2001) points out, stories are a culturally appropriate “way of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and the story teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other” (p. 145). Seidman (1998) states that he interviews because he is interested in other peoples’ stories. As he simply states, “stories are a way of knowing” (p. 1). I engaged in conversations (interviews) with elders and those with cultural knowledge, gathering
their stories through which the teachings of our ancestors have been spoken, embraced, and shared back with the community.

Participants

The idea behind qualitative research is “to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2003, p. 185). Thus, purposeful sampling was the appropriate method of selecting participants for this study. The selection criteria included: 1) Ojibwe people who have an ancestral connection to the Red Cliff community and 2) Ojibwe people who are known for their knowledge of Ojibwe language and culture.

I reached out to the community to identify possible participants for this study. I asked a cross section of elders, adults, and young people who they regarded from the community as having this type of knowledge. Being so connected to the community, I knew there could only be a few possible participants, yet it was important for me as a researcher to get input from the community.

As noted earlier, there is only one elder left in the Red Cliff community whose first language was Ojibwe; she is also well known as a gifted storyteller. A small but growing circle of younger adults have learned the language, with varying levels of proficiency; these community members are also known for their knowledge of traditional cultural teachings. The same names came up. Due to the limited number of possible participants within the community that meet the selection criteria, very few people were recommended. I selected six people whose names consistently came up. All six agreed to be interviewed.
Seidman (1998) notes that two issues must be considered in determining appropriate sample size in a qualitative study, sufficiency and saturation. Sufficiency refers to whether there are “sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect the experiences of those in it” (Seidman, 1998, p. 47). The number of possible participants that meet the selection criteria is very small; from my perspective, this would include less than ten people. As stated earlier, six names consistently came up, which adequately reflects the total population of possible participants in the community. Saturation refers to “a point in a study at which the interviewer begins to hear the same information reported” (Seidman, 1998, p. 48). While theoretical saturation was becoming evident by the time I conducted the third interview, I chose to continue with all six interviews because all of the individuals are highly regarded by the community, and it was important that their voices be heard.

I made initial contact with each potential participant individually, prior to the interview. At that time, I explained the purpose of the research and let them know they were identified by Red Cliff community members as someone who had the type of traditional knowledge base I was seeking. I asked participants to be involved in this study in a culturally appropriate manner by giving them tobacco. Their acceptance of tobacco indicated their willingness to participate. The day, time, and location for the interviews were scheduled at the convenience of each participant.

Initial agreement to participate was followed up prior to the beginning of each interview, with written documentation of informed consent for each participant. The consent form describes the purpose of the study, the participant’s right to anonymity
and confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the research project at any time (see Appendix A, Consent Form). I obtained approval from the Red Cliff Tribal Council, the governing body of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (see Appendix B, Tribal Council Resolution # 12-02-02-A), and the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board to conduct this research project (see Appendix C, IRB Approval).

**Data Collection Procedures**

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument. Individual interviews (conversations) with participants (community members) are the most appropriate type of data for this narrative research study.

Data collection procedures began with obtaining permission to tape record interviews as part of the informed consent process. Following proper cultural protocols, we share food and visited as part of the interviews. One-on-one interviews were conducted, using primarily open-ended questions (see Appendix D, Interview Guide). In addition, I took reflective notes as needed, but only when I determined on a case-by-case basis that note taking would not impede the interactive, collaborative nature of the interview process. I made this determination while each interview was taking place. The interviews lasted between one and two hours. Gifting is our customary way of demonstrating respect, appreciation, and honor; thus, at the end of each interview, participants were given traditional medicines (tobacco, sage, sweetgrass, and cedar) and other gifts for sharing their knowledge.

According to Creswell (2003), some advantages of interviewing as a method of collecting data are:

- Useful when participants cannot be observed directly.
• Participants can provide historical information.
• Allows researcher “control” over the line of questioning. (Creswell, 2003, p. 186)

Creswell also identifies some limitations of interviewing as a method of data collection:
• Provides “indirect” information filtered through the views of interviewees.
• Provides information in a designated “place” rather than the natural field setting.
• Researcher’s presence may bias responses.
• People are not equally articulate and perceptive. (Creswell, 2003, p. 186)

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The process of data analysis began with organizing the data, which involved transcribing interviews and typing reflective notes taken during the interviews. Next, I read through all the data to obtain a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning. After that, I began the coding process, or “the process of organizing the material into ‘chunks’” (Creswell, 2003, p. 192). This involved looking for patterns, common themes, and connections among and between responses of participants.

Seidman (1998) presents a detailed description of the coding process, which includes reading and marking the transcripts, labeling passages that the researcher has marked as “interesting,” describing these marked passages with words or phrases, and, finally, looking for connective threads among and between passages. These themes, or categories, emerged from the data and are presented as major findings in chapter four. The final step in analyzing the data was to interpreting the data, or determining “what were the lessons learned?” (Creswell, 1998, p. 194). I eagerly shared written transcripts, preliminary findings, and initial interpretations with participants throughout
the data analysis process, to check for accuracy and obtain feedback. This iterative
analysis was used to develop a collaborative vision for culturally strong young Ojibwe
children in the Red Cliff community.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability refers to “the consistency of an instrument in measuring whatever it
measures” (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 435). Although reliability is viewed as an important
measure of consistency in quantitative studies, overall, reliability plays a minor role in
qualitative inquiry. Validity refers to the “trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility”
of the data, and “is seen as a strength of qualitative research” (Creswell, 2003, pp. 195-
196). I used several strategies suggested by Creswell to check for accuracy of findings
and strengthen the validity of this study:

- Triangulation of interview data. The process of coding itself served to confirm
  information from multiple sources.

- Member-checking was used to determine accuracy of findings. I asked participants
to review the entire written narrative, and engaged in ongoing dialogue with them
  throughout the data analysis process.

- Rich, thick, detailed descriptions are used to convey the findings in this narrative
  inquiry.

- Clarification of my own biases as the researcher. These are conveyed in the
  beginning of this study as well as in the Role of the Researcher section.

- The advocacy/participatory approach has involved community members throughout
  the entire research process.
Limitations

The “backyard” issue could be viewed as a limitation by those who do not fully understand or recognize the value of indigenous research by indigenous peoples themselves.

The purposeful sampling procedure decreases the generalizability of findings. This study was not intended to be replicable, as it was designed to meet a specific need in the Red Cliff community.

The small sample size of up to six participants may also be a concern; however, there is only one elder and very few community members with the type of knowledge base needed to explore the research questions. Thus, the total population of potential participants that met the selection criteria was very small.

The fact that I am related to so many people on the reservation could be construed as another limitation. I knew before I started that it would be entirely possible that one or more of the participants recommended by the community could be a relative. Besides giving the community ownership in this project, this was another reason it was so important to get the community involved in this process from the beginning.

Summary

This study explores what young Ojibwe children in the Red Cliff community might know, learn, and understand about their language and culture. The collective voices of elders and community members having this knowledge has been gathered, honored, and given back to the community as a way to reclaim traditional ways of
being. The process of doing this study has already served to support and strengthen a growing movement in the community to recapture the spirit of our ancestors.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

This study explores what young Ojibwe children (prenatal through age five) in the community of Red Cliff might know, learn, and understand about their language and culture. The findings of this study have been used to guide and strengthen native language and cultural development of young Red Cliff children, as part of a larger movement within the community. By engaging in a collaborative dialogue with the community, the process of doing this study has contributed to this growing movement in the Red Cliff community to revitalize traditional ways of being and knowing.

I have engaged in conversations (interviews) with elders and members of the community known for their knowledge of Ojibwe language and culture. All participants were identified as such by the community. Doing this study has enabled me to gather their voices through which many teachings of our ancestors have been spoken, embraced, and now shared back with the community. I can only hope that I have been able to capture their passion and great wisdom as I retell their stories.

There was so much rich information generously shared by community members throughout this process, the task of retelling in a way that would make the most sense to the community was a challenging undertaking. I present their findings here in this chapter. I state “their” findings because those chosen for this study are considered keepers of indigenous knowledge, and herein lies their stories, their voices. As the researcher, I am only the vehicle through which their voices are given back to our community.
Three major themes emerged from this study: Red Cliff Ojibwe Language, teachings around the First Hill of Life (early childhood stage), and our vision for the future. There were several sub-themes, which are discussed within the context of each main theme throughout this chapter.

It is important to note that participants in this study collectively identified concrete strategies that can be used to further the language and culture revitalization movement in Red Cliff. These strategies are contained in the final chapter of this study. Bringing about change is never easy, yet if we as a community want to save our language, it is necessary. One of the elements common in participatory research such as this, involves advancing an agenda for change (Creswell, 2003).

In narrative inquiry, the researcher often begins by sharing his or her own experience. I will begin by reflecting on some of my own memories and thoughts about our language here in Red Cliff.

**Red Cliff Ojibwe Language**

As I reflect on my own experience growing up here on the Red Cliff reservation, I often think about Grandma Gokee’s silver sugar spoon. It still sits there, by the coffee pot at my dad’s house, a reminder of a grandmother I never knew, a woman known for being so wise in the ways of our people. She was a midwife, as was Mama Jo, my grandmother on my mom’s side, and between them they delivered most everyone born on the reservation during first half of the 20th century. Throughout my life I have seen and used that special silver sugar spoon, that constant reminder of a grandmother I wish I had known, for she walked on to the spirit world before I was born. Like most of our ancestors who lived during that era, she was a fluent speaker of Ojibwe language, and
possessed such great knowledge of the old traditional ways. Yet, like many of our
grandparents, Grandma Gokee and Old Grampa Gokee deliberately did not teach the
language to their children. Neither did my other grandparents, Big Jim LaFernier and
Mama Jo.

This tragic scenario is all too familiar here in Red Cliff as well as so many other
native communities across this country and indigenous communities throughout the
world. As a young child, I remember my mom telling me they (my grandparents) were
only trying to protect their children, not realizing how deeply they were really hurting
them. Unlike Grandma Gokee’s silver sugar spoon, in just two generations, much of
our language here in Red Cliff has been lost.

When That Light Came On

In this study, each participant shared their story of how they came to learn what
they know of the language. All but one of the community members I interviewed
learned Ojibwe as a second language. The one person who was fortunate to be a first
language speaker reflected on some early memories as a young child:

Well my grandma and grandpa raised me and they spoke Ojibwe all the time.
So I just naturally picked it up that way…my mother died in childbirth when I
was four. My ma was married to Mike Peacock. Beagle. They lived right
across the field from my grandma’s house. I remember my mother and I’d walk
across the field, when I was little; one of them memories you know. My pa
started to build a house up on the hill…but he never did finish it. My ma passed
away then, that’s why my grandparents raised me.
As second language learners, all other participants shared their stories, about how they came to learn Ojibwe. Keller recalled a triggering event while attending college “when that light came on”:

I think I started learning the language [around] 1989 or 1990…which I would have been about 20 or 21 years old, maybe. I wasn’t raised with it, and not being raised in a traditional Ojibwe family, say someone of a medicine dance, or big drum people, or anything like that, not really even traditional subsistence practices like trapping, hunting, and fishing and sugarbush, constantly every year. Not having that, I think that there was a big void for many years, as with most people I imagine, you go through a bit of an identity crisis. So I started learning it as part of a four-year degree program at the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis…and through that process, I connected with the people in the class and realized, to my surprise, that I had a lot more in common with those people than I could have ever imagined and I began then to look back and to question my upbringing in a number of different ways. So it kind of sparked this kind of process about thinking about my own life and who I was as a person…to define myself as being Ojibwe…The more I knew about that, through language…I was just blown away at how exciting and how fascinating and how old, like this ancient knowledge that is passed, has been passed on…and to be welcomed into that, I think was a big part of it. That process began and ever since that started it hasn’t stopped.
In terms of his own knowledge, Brian also talked about a kind of void in his life before he made a conscious decision as a young man to learn the language and the teachings:

When that light came on I guess is when I decided that there was something more to life than having the right car, the right girl, the right money, right job, and I still was empty…so I decided to explore that side of me…that Shinabe *bimadissewin*, life of Anishinaabe. I guess I experienced too much loss and too much grief and I needed something to replace that thinking, that emotional stuff. The language guided me through that transition. As I learned more about the language, the more truth, the more understanding I had of what happened to our people…the more I learned about me.

Andy talked about several different points in his life when he began learning the language and traditional teachings, from “dabbling” in his younger days, to making a conscious, serious commitment more recently:

My first memory of knowing any language goes back to when I didn’t even realize it was the language. All I knew was the kids from town didn’t know what we were saying. I think I was about 10 years old when Grampa was at the house…I remember him talking with Mike Halfaday at the house, Shirley’s dad. So I knew he knew the language. I’d ask him different things…he couldn’t always hear me, and I wasn’t sure if I was saying it right. [Later] I took courses and stuff whenever they were offered in the community or at Northland College. When I look back now, it wasn’t really serious kind of learning, it was kind of a hobby, it was something I was interested in. But when I became more
serious…actually it wasn’t that long ago, a few years back. I had to write a two-page paper; I was taking a course that involved children and families and the assignment was, ‘What are you personally going to commit yourself to do to improve the prospects of children and families?’ I suppose I could have written anything, to fulfill the requirement, but I took it seriously and I had to get really introspective…and when I looked around, both at my own kids and kids in the community, it was obvious that there was a values shift that was going on. I just think back how people didn’t have to lock their doors and things…that just did not happen when we were kids. And from the language that I did know, I knew there’s a lot of things that are conveyed, that aren’t readily translated in English. A lot of things in the language are stories themselves, about how to behave….so I came to the conclusion then, thinking about this paper, that it was really the lack of language use…that was impacting the way that we behave, because the values and everything is in the language and we’re not getting the benefit of that. That was sort of my theory, I guess, or hypothesis, why we were having a lot of problems. The next thing was, what are we going to do about it. The one thing I said I would do in order to help pass on the language I have to know it. It was a very difficult thing to commit to because it is very difficult and time consuming. But I knew that in order to really learn it that’s the way it would have to be, so it was this little two page paper that I really didn’t want to do and wasn’t that interested, that I came to it, and it’s because I took it seriously…Before that I knew quite a bit compared to maybe a lot of people, but it was only certain things. I knew I had a lot of deficiencies on that part and I
still do. The more you learn the more you know you don’t know, because every
plant in the woods has got a name and every part of that plant has got a name
and you can keep going from there and you realize how much there is to know.
Mark also talked about different times in his life when he began learning the
language and traditional ways. The strong influence of his mother, grandfather,
extended family, and elders was evident. He recalled his experience as a child and then
as an adult who moved to the city and eventually returned back home:

Ma and Grampa always…would instill that pride. Even though Grampa was a
Christian Catholic he always spoke whatever you wanted to know; you know
how do you say this or that, and he would tell you. He would never say ‘never
mind, you don’t need to know’…having ma ask him certain things, just me
being around listening to it. And she would ask old Charlie Babineau certain
words; he would come down to eat. Charlie knew how to speak Ojibwe and old
Mrs. Babineau would speak too. They didn’t use it all the time and they were
losing it…sometimes he’d say ‘I used to know that word’. Some times…we
were speaking Ojibwe and didn’t even know it. You know, like…‘go wash up,
you’re gwagwish’. That was just the way you said it. Even moo was a common
word, you could say that without swearing. But I didn’t grow up with the
language; I’m a student of the language. I moved away from home when I was
young, just out of school. It was like I would always get questions like, ‘Are
you an Indian?’ And the next question, ‘Do you know how to speak?’ I could
only tell them I knew a few words. I went to the library once, I didn’t know
how to go about learning the language. I didn’t know anyone that spoke it and
being in the city…Then I came back home many years later and there was this thing in Bad River, a class. So I…decided, yeah. Dana Jackson, the Education Coordinator there…brought in this old man, Joe Migwanaabe, from Manitoulin Island but he lived in Michigan at the time. He’s passed on now, but he was there teaching and he was a fluent Ojibwe speaker. And he had gone through the schooling where they tried to dissuade you from that. He got hit with the ruler and the stick, saying you better forget that language. He said as he was getting hit with that stick he would say in Ojibwe, ‘I’ll never forget; never will’. He was six years old. When he taught the class he didn’t quite know what age he was, probably late 60’s, early 70’s. A good old man; that’s when I called him my grandfather. Old Bob Powless is another teacher that helped out over there and he helped me a lot…I call him my grandfather too. And Dee Bainbridge too…she would stop at Bad River once in awhile and help out. I used to go to her house once a week…we went through her whole curriculum what she taught in Bayfield for 20 years. So I went there [Bad River] for a couple years, a couple times a week. Read through books, memorized. If I would go there now I would suggest that they almost close up those books up and start speaking. I think we would have gotten more out of it. So I did that…and was given…Wisconsin Certification. I passed the test enough to know how to teach what I know anyway. Once you…get around those fluent speakers you realize how much you don’t know.

Diane talked about the important role her mother and grandmother had in teaching her the stories and the teachings:
Yeah, so Grandma Pete…always told stories, that’s where I learned about…values and my mother of course reinforced it all the while I was growing up. That’s the way she always told me what was supposed to be or not. Grandma Pete of course would never hit anybody. That was one of the teachings. Grandma…spent all her time in the woods…and she never wore shoes in the woods. She was really careful…I knew that it was important to take my shoes off and go in the woods so I wouldn’t damage these plants in there. That’s her gift that she gave to me. Now I’m always in the woods, making baskets. I just love the woods, because it’s grandma there. I remember her talking Ojibwe in the house. Her and Uncle Lawrence would, Uncle Louie would come over. But they didn’t talk real loud. Which was a shame…they’d more or less wait until you were in the other room or whatever, that was the sad thing about it.

**Our Language is Sacred**

The deep spiritual significance of the language was emphasized by community members, as Brian described:

There’s that spiritual side of it…*Anishinaabe bimaadiziwin*, life of Anishinaabe…it’s the language that explains, that builds that understanding. It’s a powerful thing. A lot of people say we’re mystical people, we know how to tap into that [spiritual] energy. Those ceremonies and rituals…it’s real hard to do those when you don’t have it. It doesn’t mean you can’t do it, it just means that your understanding of its purpose and its function is not as in depth.
Along with the spiritual significance of the language, Mark described how the language itself conveys deeper meanings in relation to the Anishinaabe worldview, philosophy, and values:

*Indiwemaaganidooog*, in the language that means all my relations. Anishinaabe always prepares; they prepare for things throughout the seasons...because you only have a certain times for doing things. There’s only a certain amount of time you can cut that birch bark. There’s a certain time pick the strawberries, the raspberries, and then they’re gone until the next cycle. There’s a certain time you should catch certain fish, otherwise it’s going to be hard. With all of this you have to give your thanks, you have to give that gift of *asemaa*, that tobacco. When you speak of the animals, the plants, you call him by his Anishinaabe name. You address them in a different way when you speak Ojibwe. He’s not a thing, he’s a being. Without the plant beings and without the animal beings we would not survive. Simple as that. We have to take care of them. We don’t take everything; we just take what we need. The rocks out there, the old ones, they’ve been here a long time, they need that respect; they’re our grandfathers. They’re all our relatives. Whether he’s a standing being - a tree, or a four legged, or a winged; he has a name. When you address him by that [Anishinaabe] name he flies higher; he’s proud.

**First Hill of Life**

Community members shared a great deal of wisdom and knowledge about what is referred to in Red Cliff as the first hill of life, which is the early childhood stage. These teachings can be used to build on what is currently being done throughout the
community in terms of Ojibwe language, culture, and transmission of knowledge to young children and families. They also serve as a framework for future strategies to support efforts to reclaim indigenous knowledge in the Red Cliff community.

**Sacred Beings**

All participants shared that in the Anishinaabe world, children are viewed as sacred. Mark eloquently explained this view:

They say that we come from the spirit world, that we’re just here for a little while...some say this place is a gift, some say it’s a test. But we’re not here for very long, even if it’s a hundred years. So we come into this world, that baby that’s in the womb is a spirit. That baby...has to depend on the mother for growth and all of that, while...in the womb. But it still has spiritual helpers that bring him in and help and sit with this baby. So the baby is considered, as a young one, still a spirit. That spirit knows the language because they are given instructions in the language by their spirit helpers...so that baby knows...what’s going on around them. They’re getting help, the spirits are telling them, soothing them. We’re sent here in the language...so when you are born and are spoken to in Ojibwe...they’re comfortable with that language because that’s what they’ve heard. You start pushing this other thing [English], they have to learn that. Just like any language, if you’re exposed to that then you pick it up. Once they’re about four years old they become human beings, innocent ones. Diane shared her perspective about babies as spiritual beings, and having this “inner knowing”: 
I keep telling my children that the baby hears what you’re saying…we have this spiritual part of us; our spirits hear everything. We have this inner knowing, that the outside world will reaffirm for us, when we need to know it. Certainly if we take the example of the drum, we know that right off the bat. They tell us that the drum was the first sound in the universe. In the womb the heartbeat…was the first sound. Which makes sense, in a broader sense, if you universally think of our hearts, as mother’s heart, her heart is the first sound.

Another participant spoke of the need for expectant mothers and those around them to be cautious during the prenatal stage because of the strong spiritual aspect of carrying a child during pregnancy:

That’s where you have to be careful with these young ones, these babies. You never know who they are; especially when they’re small, they’re manidoo (spirit). Their manidoo is still developing; their spirit, while there in that mother’s womb. You got to be careful on how you talk, how you do your business around that time. Because that life, that energy thing is happening, it’s developing. You don’t want that negative energy to be a part of that, because if that’s what’s going on when that baby’s born, right away that…baby’s going to be immersed in…negative energy. And that baby is full of positive, positive energy, their spirit is still developing. That’s what we have to keep in mind.

It is commonly known throughout pow-wow circles in Anishinaabe country that a woman who is pregnant should not dance, nor should anyone dance around the circle carrying a child. It is said that by dancing with an unborn or young child, you are offering the child back to the spirit world.
Ceremonies

Participants in this study talked about some of the key ceremonies important for an Anishinaabe child, during that first hill of life. The first was the significance of the umbilical cord; however, it was emphasized by one participant that those teachings only belong in the lodge, so I will not elaborate on those teachings in this study.

Another important ceremony early in a child’s life, as described by community members in this study is the naming ceremony. Brian told of the significance of naming:

With a naming…it’s a powerful, powerful thing for them to have that name. But it’s also to have that tool…that naming tool. It might be a feather, it might be a number of different things, could be a shirt, could be a song, whatever they give that baby. So that baby is introduced all around the world…to all those manidoo and the creator…with that name. So there’s that ceremony, then you talk about what your [namesake’s] responsibility is to that baby, then…their spiritual life, their path. That’s a very powerful thing that brings a community together to raise that baby.

Mark also discussed the significance of the naming ceremony from a slightly different perspective, describing how a child is helped to find their name:

That little one will find his name, someone will find his name. They come in the spirit world with a name already, it’s up to us to find it. Someone doesn’t give you a name, they find out who you are. And then when you have that ceremony, that proper ceremony and feast and gifting, you’re celebrating that name. Those spirits are smiling saying, ‘She’s found her name; she’s clear now. Someone
cared enough to find out who you are.’ It’s a special name, that Anishinaabe name. That’s who you’re known as in the spirit world. That’s who you’ll be known as when you go back; they will welcome you back home. So, it’s a big deal.

Some participants referred to making a hole in a baby’s first moccasins as being a significant milestone. One person described it in this way:

Putting a hole in their moccasin after the baby is born…it’s kind of like related to that hole in that baby’s head so that spirit can go in there. Knowledge goes in there and the baby not with the ears, but through that…I got the idea that it wasn’t exactly like you would see in learning maybe in a contemporary sense. It’s more spiritual.

Another community member briefly stated, “Their moccasins, do that to their moccasins.” The actual reference to putting a hole in a child’s moccasins was left unsaid, but was understood by both of us.

One important occasion for pow-wow dancers is called the first-time dancing. Andy talked about the significance of this particular event:

The first time they dance, that’s another thing. That’s a big thing, to go to a pow- wow you’ll see, they make a big thing out of that. All them people watch that one person dancing for the first time. So that’s a big milestone. Then they’ll take that opportunity to tell them…maybe your grandma, your family…they did this for you, they put together your outfit. Take that opportunity to tell them they cared enough about you to do this and why it’s important to emphasize the cultural part of their identity.
Participants talked about other ceremonies and rituals that occur throughout an
Anishinaabe person’s lifetime, during the second, third, and fourth hills of life. Some
of the ceremonal events that occur during these later stages (after early childhood) in
life include: first deer, first moon (menstruation), marriage, and ultimately the most
important journey, walking on to the spirit world.

Stories

Storytelling was known by participants as a very effective, traditional way of
teaching and learning for young children, adults and elders. Since creation, storytelling
has been an effective method of teaching learning for Anishinaabe people, where
knowledge has been passed from one generation to the next. Mark told of the creation
story:

The creation story is the whole story of life. It’s a circle. We come from the
spirit world when we’re born and we go through different things in our life and
then we go back. We go back home. That’s what giwe means in Ojibwe. It
means he or she goes home. Giwedin is in the north. That’s where the northern
lights are. When we look at…the northern lights…that’s the spirits that are
going back home. The creation story tells of a flood, of destruction and of
rebirth. A spirit woman – some will say it’s Wenebozhoo, some will say it’s a
star woman – comes down and gives birth…to human…twins. That’s how
human beings got back here. These twins got sick, and all of the animal helpers
felt sorry for these twins. And the spirit woman could give life…but she
couldn’t help her own
child[ren]. The bear offered his flesh, said there was medicine in his flesh. That’s why we call him the medicine bear. He helped those two little ones cause he loved them and brought them back to good health. The other animals followed suit and said, “You can have ours too. We’ll help you.” So the spirit woman – star woman – told them about how to live in this world. She showed them the names of all the plants, animals, and how to respect, and what they needed to survive. And then she told them the story that one day, she would have to go back home…and she prepared them for that. And she said, “one day you will have to go back home too.” Then she went back home. So that creation story entails everything. That’s how you learn things.

Mark also talked about Wenebozhoo, who is sometimes referred to as a trickster. He is half human, half spirit. Wenebozhoo stories can only be told during the winter, while snow is on the ground; however, Mark shared some general thoughts about what these stories convey:

The Wenebozhoo stories should come back and they should be taught in a way…[to show] by example. Wenebozhoo takes on these human traits and human frailties as he becomes a human being. He becomes greedy sometimes. He could be mean, or he could be loving; he could be timid or he could be brave; just whatever trait humans have….Wenebozhoo is the foolish one; we learn from him how to be and how not to be. The little ones should be taught more about that. You know…don’t be this way, don’t take more than you need cause you’ll end up foolish. That’s what the stories are; they’ll tell you.
Andy talked about other stories that would be good for young children, as a way of conveying lessons of life, or teachings. One story conveys the power of the hand-drum:

There was a little boy who was always watching people in his village, he liked to keep quiet and observe instead of talking. For some reason the people were squabbling in the community and fighting over things. So one day, the boy went missing and they looked for him but couldn’t find him; so they thought that he was dead or something. But he comes back. Nobody paid attention until he started playing that drum, then everybody stopped. That’s a story I heard about. It works too, if you ever go to a meeting or someplace where…the people…are jibber jabbering and as soon as they knock that drum everybody quiets right down, right down.

Andy noted that this is one story about a particular type of hand-drum; there are other stories from other places. There are also many other stories about other types and varieties of drums, as well as many, many other stories that have been passed down through many generations. Participants referred to other stories, such as: why dogs bark; how the raccoon got his stripes; where corn comes from; the story of ochipi (the robin), and so forth; however, the actual stories themselves were not told during the interviews.

Values

All participants talked about the importance of traditional Ojibwe values, and how it is through the language that we truly come to understand them. Andy offered a
telling analysis of what he called a “values shift”, along with a description of how the loss of language has negatively impacted traditional values in the community:

…and when I looked around, both at my own kids and kids in the community, it was obvious that there was a values shift that was going on. I just think back how people didn’t have to lock their doors and things…that just did not happen when we were kids. And from the language that I did know, I knew there’s a lot of things that are conveyed, that aren’t readily translated in English. A lot of things in the language are stories themselves, about how to behave….so I came to the conclusion then…that it was really the lack of language use…that was impacting the way that we behave, because the values and everything is in the language and we’re not getting the benefit of that. That was sort of my theory, I guess, or hypothesis, why we were having a lot of problems.

Other community members discussed values in terms of what would be important to teach young children in Red Cliff. Diane described some specific values to focus on:

I think love most of all. That’s a cultural teaching that the whole family gives that baby. Of course, sharing, we do that so much, we give so much and we share in different ways…that little one sees that and knows that sharing is important. And of course, respect…I [reinforce] that with the kids all the time. And honesty. I’ll tell you a story. In order to teach the kids that stealing wasn’t the thing to do…we went up picking apples at Torbick’s and the kids really wanted to see what it was like to take an apple off the tree. Well…I thought, how do I do this…so I had four dollars…and put it on the tree and took four
apples, which was dumb. But…I didn’t steal…maybe the way I did it made them remember it more.

**Transmission of Knowledge**

In addition to stories, participants discussed other significant aspects of transmission of indigenous knowledge. It was stressed by several participants that teaching and learning is a lifelong process. One participant commented on the need for a holistic approach with young children:

> It’s important that we…help these young people develop emotionally, spiritually, physically, intellectually, socially, and help them with their responsibility with paddling their own canoe.

The same participant talked about teaching and learning as a two-way street, how he continues to learn from young children:

> Before it’s the elders, it’s always been the little bitty ones for me that teach me something. What they teach me is the wonderment of things….a lot of times adults interfere with that wonderment, because right away they want to define that for them, they don’t give them a chance. Adults should just let them wonder a little bit about things…because when they start using the language, it helps their development in a lot of different areas. Also, symbolism, metaphor is very, very powerful.

Keller offered other insights about education and the transmission of language and cultural knowledge to young children:

> Some people say when you have a baby you put them in a *dikinaagan* [cradle board] and you keep them bound up in there and that helps them to become a
very focused observer…I’ve heard some people say that that’s when they’re listening. Once they start running around they don’t listen as much…it’s how they really observe and how they watch everything, and the very fine details of how you act, the very fine details of the world around them. If they have a chance to watch leaves and watch the water, show them as much of the world as you can around them. I think that’s a really important time…to watch and observe and be exposed to those different things, because that’s all going to be there for them to use. As far as language goes, and some of the more traditional or cultural teachings…have them around the drums, have them around the pipes, have them around the lodges and the different ceremonies and that’s just going to reinforce everything for them…This is also a good time, I think like for my own personal experiences, to use as much language as possible, to use it with the child, but also for them to observe and hear it spoken between adults, other family members, other kids. If you can get them around fluent speaking children that are a little older or the same age, it’s all going to impact their language acquisition. Not just commands…but to create an environment…where they have the chance to create language themselves; to respond, not just one or two word utterances but begin to build the foundations for sentence structure and grammatical knowledge. That’s really important.

A Vision for the Future

I asked all participants to tell me about their dream or vision for the future and how we as a community can create a new generation of speakers. This is ultimately what this narrative research project is leading to – advancing an agenda for change. The
community members involved in this study collectively defined what that agenda is, and how we as a community can get there.

**Undoing the Past**

Participants talked about an enormous amount of pain, grief, and healing that needs to be done in order to come to terms with, and get beyond the past. One community member shared:

We have a lot of our own people who aren’t acknowledging *Anishinaabe bimadizewin*…life of Anishinaabe. A lot of times our people were told that those old ways were no longer needed and that we had to get prepared to modern times. So our people were taught to be ashamed of their very existence. There’s a reason why a lot of our people don’t speak the language and it’s based out of love of our grandmothers and grandfathers. They didn’t want us to go through what they’ve gone through so they thought it was better for their children that they don’t speak the language because they’re just gonna be knocked the hell out of anyway. Cutting their hair and all the horseshit things that they did to assimilate us…but

I’m at a point where I don’t blame the *Chimookomaan* because I don’t want to give him that power anymore. I would just like people to be aware, to know and not pretend like that didn’t happen. We have a lot of people that were acculturated…that like to pretend that didn’t happen…they desensitize themselves to all that business. These teachings and this language will help them understand. It’s hard to be Shinaabe. Our faith is being tested. That’s all
we have. I know that. It’s hard…but we got to hang in there, we got to keep going.

Keller expressed his view of the language as a way to overcome the pain, and to begin the healing in the community:

I think overall as an Ojibwe nation it’s kind of like, there’s still a lot of pain, there’s still a lot of suffering and healing that needs to take place for the community. Learning the language is a great opportunity to find wellness in life…if you really take to heart some of the teachings and deep knowledge that is associated with them about how and why we do the things that were given way back.

**Creating a New Generation of Fluent Speakers**

As language advocates, all participants adamantly expressed they want to see a new generation of fluent speakers. Given the status of our language in Red Cliff, we must continue to build on efforts currently underway, but even more critical, develop and implement a variety of new strategies throughout the community. It was the consensus of community members interviewed that a community-wide, multi-faceted approach is crucial. Strategies at all levels – home, school, and community – are vital at our stage of language loss. It was reiterated that no one person, group or entity can do this alone; we need to support each other so that we as a community can move forward and reach that vision.

As we move forward, Brian urged everyone to be aware of the resistance from within, and that the path we take to create a new generation of fluent speakers in Red Cliff is unique:
…As we’re trying to generate this new, create this new generation of fluent speakers, is knowing that we have to undo that past…do a critical analysis, to take a good look at the resistance…More times than not, that resistance comes from within, so our reasons for doing this language business is different than other places because of the status of the language here in Red Cliff. Because we don’t have that pool of elders who are fluent, we just don’t have that luxury that a lot of other tribes have.

Andy offered his thoughts on the direction we need to take to create a new generation of fluent speakers, suggesting the community make a deliberate effort to provide more opportunities and incentives to encourage language learning for young people of child bearing age:

It wouldn’t be easy but you could do it. You have to do it in different ways, but the main thing is…before those babies are even born we have to go back to that. But to even get to that point you have to talk. So one suggestion is to concentrate on young people, child bearing age…There’s a lot of these young girls that have the aptitude, that are good learners and they have an interest, not everyone has the interest. If these younger girls, but it could be boys too, they have the interest and the aptitude, we can’t squander that. We’ve got to keep on it, motivate them, provide incentives, proficiency levels, maybe have a feast for them…we got to just encourage that, nurture that…to me, the way is that the child will be talked to in Ojibwe. That is the way. Of course, it goes without saying that if you have other programs that would then support this language use outside of the home, that would be desirable…in terms of preschool…the way
that we’re forced to live today, children are in school for X number of hours. Even if you have two parents, a lot of times they both have to work. So this immersion concept, that’s where it’s at. That is really very important in terms of the future. Maybe not even for creating this new generation of speakers, but supporting this other group, these kids that have already been talked to. That’s how I see it.

Andy further discussed the need for individuals, parents, and the community as a whole to place a true priority on learning and revitalizing the language:

Well you look at Lac du Flambeau now, you graduate from college they’ll send you a check for $5,000. That’s an incentive, that’s a reward. That’s a message going out there, more than just to that person…there’s value conveyed there…it’s worth something. I think that’s where we got to put our language, if it really is a priority, and I don’t know if it is, and I say that because there’s just so many competing [needs]. It’s just becoming, for the most part, acceptable, where you could have these language programs now and you wouldn’t be denigrated for even talking it, wanting to learn. So to try to hang onto it…we’ve got to get it beyond acceptable, to a real priority. Not just paper, but a real priority. Yeah, it’s a long road but I don’t think it would be that difficult…or costly…compared to the 20 million dollar casino. But it could be done.

Mark gave some concrete ideas of things that can be done to increase awareness, understanding, and support throughout the community:

I think…exposure to the language in every form, not just a couple classes during the week at the certain time…to be exposed to the language throughout school,
health clinic, all of the administration places could be exposed to it. Everywhere you look there’s Ojibwe somewhere…we should be surrounded by it. Whether it’s a street sign, or a name on a door, then it would be reinforced by the language…you should hear it at home and outside of home, at our stores, at our gas station. Very simple, be exposed to it…but I don’t see it around too much. I don’t see too much cedar over doorways of our education places and our health clinics. All I see is posters stating the concern of our people…when you hang up those medicines it’s for a purpose. Medicines have been given to us to use; to stay healthy and not just in body, but in mind and spirit too…

Diane gave several ideas for strengthening use of the language at community gatherings and events, suggesting ways to make language learning fun:

When I do anything with our community, there’s always the language in it. Like at the Mishomis House, we did baskets and learned the language with that. I’d like to see more of us do language, whatever activity it is…I’d also like to see our round tables like they did at Minneapolis, where we bring something, but fun. People don’t like to sit there if it’s boring. Like we had those [language] stations that we had at the Prevention Center and that was cool. We were going to have a second one but we never did. So I think continuity no matter what. And involve the elders, they are our link and then families will bring their children. And I really believe in giving gifts away all the time…it doesn’t have to be a lot, for everything we do…a little something.
Keller viewed the language movement in Red Cliff as already having begun to a certain extent, yet added that much more needs to be done. He suggested starting immersion with very young children, but advised against waiting too long:

I think it’s going to take a long time, but it needs to happen and for it to happen would be a great thing. Even for that process to begin and for it to continue. But starting is always difficult and it seems like some people say, well we’re not ready yet, we’re not ready for this, we’re not ready for that, but quite honestly I don’t think you’re every really ready, you just kind of have to jump in, start and you pick up what you need on the way….But I think the process has already begun in a lot of ways. There are people who are interested. But like you said, the handful of adults that [have] some degree of knowledge, as a collective…and as an Ojibwe nation…there’s a lot of knowledge. And a lot of kindness and generosity and…support that I think is essential to having an effective language program, cultural program, revolution or renaissance, or whatever you want to call it. So…at Red Cliff, I guess what would make sense to me is starting with the very young kids; starting with a small group of children and families that are going to want to be a part of it…

Brian presented an in-depth analysis along with a variety of strategies to support and strengthen the language revitalization movement in the community. He discussed the need for societal change in order for the vision to become reality:

So as a people we are going through this process, we decided as a group [Red Cliff Ojibwe Language & Heritage Committee], that it was our societal responsibility to design programming that’s going to target three areas: the
home, the individual, and the community through the schools. Putting those strategies in place, to help people arrive at something…when you start identifying who you are and identifying what your needs are, not relying on someone from the outside to do that business, then you’re getting closer, getting closer to addressing the needs of your community, in knowing what it is that needs to be done. So rather than reinventing the wheel…is finding out what fits, what strategies you lay out as you set that strategic direction. What we have to do is, we have to put those things in place that are gonna help with the preparedness for this societal change throughout the community and that’s not a simple thing to do. So when I think about that visioning, we need to create those fluent speakers…one way is through a master apprenticeship program…then there’s the immersion experience…Red Cliff is unique, we might have 3 different types of immersion, 4 different types. There’s the gabeshiwin, those language camps…toddlers…K-3 may be another immersion experience. So that’s what it is, how we’re saying we’re going to bring about this change in Red Cliff and…it’s guided by the language. And there’s that other kind of dance that’s coming back here, it’s going to be soon, real soon, and that’s exciting. When that happens, and it will happen, then people have access to something that they that they haven’t had access to for a long time…it’s coming back right here…the time has come…those spirits, those stories, they want to happen right here. It’s gonna happen.

Mark talked about the resilience of the language and our people, and his hope for the future:
This language is here, it belongs here, it’s always been here. No matter how hard people have tried to take it away, for whatever reason, it survived. It survived for a reason. I hope some day maybe my grandkids will talk about their grandpa and say, ‘You know he used to sit at the table and he would speak English; he didn’t speak Ojibwe like we do.’ I hope that happens some day.

It is with this sense of hope and resilience, that I too, dream of future generations yet unborn. I still think about Grandma Gokee’s silver sugar spoon, and I see that constant reminder every time I go visit with Dad. It might be hard to see at times when other things begin to accumulate, but it’s still there, a small yet powerful symbol of strength and survival. Much like Grandma’s spoon, our language will live on.
CHAPTER V: NEXT STEPS

Introduction

The community members who participated in this study generously shared their stories, experiences, wisdom, and insights. They were recommended by a cross-section of the community because they are known and highly respected for their knowledge of our language and cultural teachings. This final chapter consists of a discussion of our findings in relation to the literature. I state “our” findings because they are the keepers of knowledge. This project emerged from and belongs to the community. The keepers of knowledge (participants) in this study have collectively arrived at an agenda for change, which is imbedded throughout the last section of this chapter, our vision for the future.

Findings and Discussion

Three major themes emerged from this study: Red Cliff Ojibwe language, teachings around the First Hill of Life, and our vision for the future. There were several sub-themes within each main theme, which are discussed within each major theme.

Red Cliff Ojibwe Language

Each participant shared their story of how they came to learn what they know of the language and cultural teachings. Tragically, one participant is the last living first language speaker in Red Cliff. Her grandparents, who were fluent speakers, raised her because her mother died when she was very young. The tragic fact that there is only one elder left who learned to speak the language as a young child illustrates the alarming status of language in Red Cliff. This unfortunately corresponds with
Fishman’s continuum of eight stages of language loss, with stage eight being closest to extinction (1991).

The status of the language in Red Cliff illustrates the severity of language loss throughout many indigenous communities, as described by Gibbs (2002), Greymorning (1999), Krauss (1996), Crawford (1995), Fishman (1991), and others. Rosemary Christiansen found less than 500 fluent Ojibwe language speakers in the tri-state area of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan (cited in Peacock & Wisuri, 2002). Hermes (2004) estimated at the most 15 fluent Ojibwe speakers remain within a 100-mile radius of Lac Courte Oreilles, Wisconsin, with most speakers being over the age of 65. As reiterated throughout this study, only one first language speaker remains in Red Cliff.

**When that Light Came On**

All other participants learned Ojibwe as a second language, and each shared their stories of how they came to learn the language. Most reflected on the influence their parents, extended family, and elders had on them when they were young as well as throughout adulthood. In some cases there was a triggering event which preceded their language learning; in other cases it has been a gradual, lifelong endeavor.

Some participants referred to a kind of void in their life that was only filled through learning the language and cultural teachings. This void was attributed to the loss of language. The loss of language to its people was described by McCarty, Watahomigie, & Yamamoto (1999), as “a private and public wound yet unhealed, a concrete and visible tear in the web of family relationships and community life…a function of asymmetrical power relations and ideologies of domination and control”. Participants in this study have indeed begun the healing process for themselves, their
families, and the community, by making that conscious, deliberate decision to reclaim traditional ways of knowing and being.

**Our Language is Sacred**

The deep spiritual significance of the language was emphasized by participants. One community member explained it in this way,

There’s that spiritual side of it…*Anishinaabe bimaadiziwin*, life of Anishinaabe…it’s the language that explains, that builds that understanding. It’s a powerful thing…it’s real hard to do those [ceremonies and rituals] when you don’t have it. It doesn’t mean you can’t do it, it just means that your understanding of its purpose and its function is not at in depth.

Along with the spiritual aspect, participants also described how the language itself conveys deeper meanings in relation to the Anishinaabe world view, philosophy, and values.

Cleary and Peacock’s (1998) study of American Indian education included an examination of the current state of indigenous languages across the country. They provide many insights into the complexity of language issues facing native communities. One of their findings indicated there are two schools of thought about the relationship between languages and culture: one is that the demise of the language will mean the demise of the culture; the other says that aspects of culture can exist without language (Cleary & Peacock, 1998). Participants in this study found that the language itself conveys deeper meanings in relation to world view, philosophy, and values; thus, supporting the first premise, that it is only through the language that cultural meanings can be truly conveyed.
First Hill of Life

Sacred Beings

In the Anishinaabe world, children are viewed as sacred. All participants in this study shared that view. As one person described, “That baby…has spiritual helpers that bring him in…so the baby is considered, as a young one, still a spirit. Once they’re about four years old they become human beings, innocent ones.” Another community member added, “Their manidoo is still developing; their spirit, while there in that mother’s womb.”

Peacock and Wisuri (2002) point out the spiritual aspect of traditional Ojibwe life, indicating the purposes of traditional education “were to serve the practical needs of the people (to gain life skills) and to enhance the soul (to grow in spiritual ways).”

Ceremonies

Participants in this study talked about key ceremonies in an Anishinaabe child’s life. The first occurs shortly after birth, having to do with the umbilical cord; however it was stated by one community member that those teachings belong in the lodge, so I will not elaborate in this study.

Another significant ceremony in an Anishinaabe child’s life is the naming ceremony. The importance of naming was described by one community member, “It’s a powerful, powerful thing for them to have that name…that baby is introduced all around the world…to all those manidoo and the creator…with that name”. Another participant added, “It’s a special name, that Anishinaabe name. That’s who you’re known as in the spirit world. That’s who you’ll be known as when you go back; they will welcome you back home.”
In her study of Blackfeet education in Montana, Dorothy Still Smoking (1997) discussed the importance of Blackfeet naming. However, the literature I reviewed is limited in terms of Ojibwe naming ceremonies, and is non-existent regarding Red Cliff Ojibwe naming.

Some participants referred to making a hole in a baby’s first moccasins and first-time dancing as being significant milestones for young Red Cliff children. It was also noted that many other ceremonies and rituals occur later on in life, such as first deer, first moon, marriage, and walking on to the next world. The literature I reviewed was silent on Red Cliff Ojibwe ceremonial events.

**Stories**

Storytelling is known as an effective method of teaching and learning for young children, adults, and elders. Knowledge has been passed from one generation to the next in this way since creation. One community member in this study shared the Anishinaabe story of creation, and talked about the significance of *Wenebozhoo* and other stories, as a way of conveying lessons of life, or teachings.

Linda Grover (1999) provided a comprehensive description of traditional Ojiwe educational philosophy and methods. Storytelling was traditionally and continues to be an effective method of education involving young children, extended families, and elders.

**Values**

All participants talked about the importance of traditional Ojibwe values, and how it is through the language that we truly come to understand them. One participant offered his theory about this values shift, including a description of how the loss of
language has negatively impacted traditional values in the Red Cliff community. This finding supports Crawford’s (1996) “working hypothesis” about language loss. According to Crawford, among other internal and external factors, “Language loss reflects a corresponding shift from traditional indigenous values to those of Western society. Encroaching individualism, pragmatism, and materialism have eroded traditional ways of thinking and have consequently affected language loss” (Crawford, 1996).

Another participant identified love, sharing, respect, kindness, and honesty as being significant Ojibwe values to convey to young children in Red Cliff. Storytelling, along with other traditional methods, is still used to effectively pass on knowledge from one generation to the next. In this way, young people learn life skills as well as native philosophy, teachings, and values (Cleary & Wisuri, 2002).

**Transmission of Knowledge**

In addition to stories, participants discussed other important aspects of transmission of indigenous knowledge. It was stressed by several participants that teaching and learning is a lifelong process. One participant commented on the need for a holistic approach with young children, to help young people “develop emotionally, spiritually, physically, intellectually, socially, and help them with their responsibility with paddling their own canoe”. The same participant talked about teaching and learning as a two-way street, how adults should not interfere with a child’s wonderment, and the power of symbolism and metaphor while engaging young children.

The literature on American Indian education supports the effectiveness of a holistic approach with Ojibwe children, where transmission of knowledge occurs
naturally through ceremonies, songs, and stories, by listening, watching, and participating (Peacock & Wisuri, 2002; Grover, 1999; Child, 1999). Their findings are supported by this study, as one participant described how children learn by watching, listening, and observing the world around them. It was further stressed by the community member that children should be surrounded by the language and ceremonies, drums, pipes, and lodges as much as possible.

**Our Vision for the Future**

**Undoing the Past**

A recurring theme that arose in this study was the enormous amount of pain, suffering, and grief in the community, and that much healing that needed. Community members interviewed expressed that in order for healing to occur, we must come to terms with, and get beyond the past. As one participant described, “…our people were taught to be ashamed of their very existence…I’m at a point where I don’t blame the Chimookomaan because I don’t want to give him that power anymore. I would just like people to be aware, to know and not pretend like that didn’t happen…”

Another participant reaffirmed the healing power of the language and the teachings that will help our people understand, and help the community overcome the grief, “…there’s still a lot of pain, there’s still a lot of suffering and healing that needs to take place for the community. Learning the language is a great opportunity to find wellness in life”.

Undoing the past can easily be viewed from the perspective of oppression theory. Oppression theory tells us that the first step in breaking the chains of oppression is to recognize that we, as indigenous peoples, are products of externally imposed
oppression as well as our own internalized oppression. Confronting this reality is necessary to becoming agents in our own liberation (Apple, 2003; Freire, 2002; Smith, 2001; Gramski, 1995; Shor, 1992; McLaren, 1989; Memmi, 1965).

Cleary and Peacock (1998) provided a comprehensive description of the nature of oppression, the oppressor, internalized oppression or “suboppressor behavior,” and the impact it has had on generations of native people (p. 63). They extend suboppressive behavior to include self-destructive acts such as alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide. Fortunately, suicide has not been a major issue in Red Cliff; however, alcoholism and drug abuse are rampant. Cleary and Peacock challenge educators, communities, and individuals to confront the remnants of oppression, as the first step toward liberation and freedom. We must face the harsh legacy of oppression and deal with historical grief in our community in order to begin the healing.

Gollnick (2000) aptly describes oppressive forces operating within native communities, as though she was referring specifically to Red Cliff:

The history of oppression has created many Native American communities who produce self-inflicted wounds that can hold their communities down, often through alcoholism or almost insurmountable feelings of jealousy. Unfortunately this is an area this is not discussed openly. The question becomes, “How do we reawaken souls to the beauty within?” The toughest challenge is learning to honor ourselves…it’s all about freeing the mind. (cited in Benham, 2000, p. 111)

Whether we use the Freirian model of transformation, or borrow the Kaupapa Maori model from our New Zealand relatives, or develop our own Red Cliff Ojibwe
model of transformation, in order to undo the past, we must first recognize and deal with oppressive forces within our community. Only then can the healing begin.

**Creating a New Generation of Fluent Speakers**

As language advocates, all community members adamantly expressed they want to see a new generation of fluent Ojibwe speakers. Given the status of our language in Red Cliff, we must create and implement a multitude of strategies throughout the community. Those interviewed indicated that a community-wide, multi-faceted approach is absolutely essential if we are to revitalize the language and traditional knowing. Strategies at all levels – home, school, and community – are critical at our stage of language loss.

**Community**

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, it is imperative that we recognize and deal with the resistance, those oppressive forces pervasive throughout the community; as one participant observed, “…More times than not, that resistance comes from within…”

Community members voiced the need for community-wide strategies to support and strengthen the language revitalization movement. One participant, a member of the Red Cliff Ojibwe Language and Heritage Committee, declared it was our societal responsibility to set a strategic direction, to identify who we are and what our needs are, rather than relying on someone from the outside. Peacock and Day (1999), Crawford (1996), and others note that the desire, the will, and leadership needed to create the movement must emerge from within.
Several participants acknowledged that with only one remaining first language speaker in Red Cliff, we do not have a pool of fluent elders to help revitalize our language. This is a challenge which may force us to bring in fluent speakers from other areas. Other native communities with few speakers have sought out fluent speakers from other communities, such as the Blackfeet in Montana (Kipp, 2002) and the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe in Wisconsin (Hermes, 2004).

Another participant advocated for the community as a whole, including individuals, parents, families, programs, and tribal government to place a true priority on learning and revitalizing the language. With a sense of urgency, he implored,

“IT’S JUST BECOMING, FOR THE MOST PART, ACCEPTABLE, WHERE YOU COULD HAVE THESE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS NOW AND YOU WOULDN’T BE DENIGRATED FOR EVEN TALKING IT, WANTING TO LEARN. SO TO TRY TO HANG ONTO IT…WE’VE GOT TO GET IT BEYOND ACCEPTABLE, TO A REAL PRIORITY. NOT JUST PAPER, BUT A REAL PRIORITY.”

Placing a true priority on revitalizing the language was a critical element found by Peacock and Day (1999), as they looked at several communities who have instituted language revival efforts. They emphasized the critical importance of political, community, and school leaders to strongly acknowledge the language is important enough to save in perpetuity.

Participants put forth several ways to demonstrate the value of the language. One community member suggested providing incentives, such as feasts, scholarships, recognition, and other ways to honor and motivate learning and encourage use of the language, particularly concentrating on young people of child bearing age to nurture
their interest. Some revitalization efforts targeting the whole community have begun during the past year, including the first ever Red Cliff Ojibwe language summit.

One of the participants in this study is the founder and coordinator for the annual *Ojibwemowin Gabeshiwin* (Ojibwe Language Immersion Camp), which has been held in Red Cliff during the past four summers at Raspberry, a traditional gathering place of our people located on Lake Superior. Participation of Red Cliff tribal members has been growing each year, which clearly demonstrates the language movement has already begun. With growing interest and participation of Red Cliff members, it is obvious more opportunities such as this are desired and needed. As Darrell Kipp (2000), co-founder of the Piegan Institute in Montana succinctly put it, “The language is powerful, they will come around to you…find the ones who want it, and work with them.”

Participants offered numerous ideas to increase awareness, understanding, and encouraging use of the language throughout the community, such as accessing the local tribal newspaper and radio station, naming roads in the language, use of posters/signs in public places, creation of language tables (informal gatherings), language workshops with fun activities, and assessment (of proficiency levels).

**School**

Perhaps the most promising strategy to revitalize the language and traditional knowing, as voiced by participants is the creation of language immersion in Red Cliff. Several participants suggested we begin with developing immersion for very young children, and expand from there. One participant suggested we may need to create three or four different types of immersion: language camps, toddlers, K-3 and beyond. In my
role as Early Childhood Administrator, has been exciting to see how language immersion has emerged as one of the four major goals of the center through our strategic planning process which involved parents, staff and community. It has also been an honor for me to be an active participant in a growing partnership between our center and the Red Cliff Ojibwe Language and Heritage Committee.

One participant, who has had firsthand experience as a co-founder of the first Ojibwe language immersion preschool at Lac Courte Oreilles, acknowledged that starting is always difficult, and people keep saying that they’re not ready, but “quite honestly I don’t think you’re ever really ready, you just kind of have to jump in, start and you pick up what you need on the way.” The literature on language revitalization clearly supports language immersion as the most effective way to create new speakers. Delong (1998) conducted an extensive review of studies on bi-lingual education, partial immersion, and total immersion, and found total immersion to be the by far the most effective way of learning a second language. A growing body of research strongly supports this conclusion (Reyhner, 1999; Peacock & Day, 1999; Cantoni, 1997; Crawford, 1995; Fishman, 1991).

One of the biggest challenges to starting immersion in Red Cliff, as expressed by participants, was the lack of fluent teachers in the community. As noted earlier in this study, we may have to seek out fluent speakers from other communities, who have the aptitude, desire, and physical ability to teach very young children. One participant suggested, “rather than reinventing the wheel…it finding out what fits.” In other words, as we move forward in Red Cliff, it behooves us as a community to take a serious look at what is working in other communities, such as the models presented in chapter two:
the Maori (New Zealand), Hawaiian, Blackfeet (Montana), Arapaho (Wyoming) and our neighbors to the south, the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe here in Wisconsin. These communities are recognized leaders in the language revitalization movement, as they have had clear and convincing success with language immersion.

**Home**

Participants in this study suggested some strategies geared for the home. This includes individuals, parents and extended family. Certainly the strategies designed for the whole community discussed earlier would apply here, as individual and family participation necessarily involves choice. As one community member noted earlier, you can’t make anyone do it, and not everyone has the interest. He further recommended we target and encourage young people of child bearing age, who have the interest and the aptitude, before those babies are even born, so that the children will be talked to in Ojibwe. Numerous studies on language acquisition have confirmed what human beings have known since the beginning of time: that babies learn to speak like those around him (Puckett, Marshall & Davis, 1999; Dehouwer, 1999; Slegers, 1997; Morgan, 1996).

But the opportunities for individuals, parents, and extended family members to learn must exist in order for people to access them. One participant suggested a master apprenticeship program. This strategy involves teaming fluent speakers with young adults, and has been used successfully in other communities with few fluent speakers (Hinton, 2001, Kipp, 2000; Reyhner, 1999).

A profound opportunity for people of all ages to learn the language and sacred teachings is through participation in ceremonies. One participant strongly encouraged
parents to bring their children to participate in different ceremonies, to have them around the lodges, pipes, and the drum as much as possible. This path is open to anyone wishing to travel there. Since the Indian Religious Freedom Act went into effect in 1978, we are once again able to openly practice our ways, without persecution.

As the movement gains strength in Red Cliff, the old ways are coming back. As one participant said, “And there’s that other kind of dance that’s coming back here, it’s going to be soon, real soon, and that’s exciting. When that happens, and it will happen, then people have access to something that they haven’t had access to for a long time.”

**Further Recommendations**

Over the course of the past several years, I have studied oppression theory, theories of language loss and acquisition, American Indian education, and language revitalization, including an extensive review of literature pertaining to five communities where indigenous language and culture revitalization is happening. The main purpose for reviewing the literature was both to expand my own knowledge base and to inform the people of Red Cliff about how we might approach language and culture revitalization here in our community. I have also had the honor of visiting the Maori in New Zealand and the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe language immersion sites to get a firsthand look at immersion in action. In addition, I had incredibly rich conversations with Red Cliff elders and community members about life in Red Cliff, who so willingly shared their stories, wisdom, and insights. I urge the community to listen to their voices and take heed of the following recommendations for the community.

- *Red Cliff Language Immersion Plan*
In order to revitalize the language in Red Cliff, it will be critical for the tribe to create opportunities for Ojibwe language immersion. The time is now. Language immersion was the most significant finding of this study regarding how we as a community can create a new generation of fluent speakers here in Red Cliff. Along with “lessons learned” from a review of five models of language revitalization, it is clear this is what we must do. What makes the most sense for Red Cliff is to begin Ojibwe language immersion with the youngest group of children who are already at the Early Childhood Center. This would involve a group of eight children in one room, ages 6 weeks to 12 months, currently staffed with two teachers. Following is a workable plan for implementing an immersion program at the center, beginning with the infants and expanding each year to include older children, for the next five years and beyond.

**Year 1 – Start with Babies**

The center will need to recruit and hire a fluent speaker who will partner with two infant teachers for at least two hours of the day, speaking only Ojibwe to the babies, parents (as they bring their children), and infant room teachers. This way the children, parents, and staff will all have the opportunity to learn and engage in conversational Ojibwe on a daily basis. Additional funding to hire an Ojibwe language speaker would be helpful; however, in the event additional funding for language immersion is not secured, Early Childhood Center consultant funds will be used.

**Years 2-3 – Add Toddlers**

The following year those eight children will continue to have at least two hours of language immersion as they move to the 1-2 year old room. The two infant room
teachers and the fluent speaker will follow along with those same babies who will have had a full year of language immersion experience. The Red Cliff Early Childhood Center teachers already stay with the same children for three years; they simply move to a more age appropriate classroom along with the babies each year.

During the second year of immersion, the language speaker will also partner with eight new upcoming babies, along with their parents and the new infant teachers. In two years, the original immersion children will move to the 2-3 year old room. The children who were infants during Year 2 will move to the 1-2 year old room. During Year 3, three classrooms will have language immersion, which will require the hiring of another fluent speaker.

**Year 4-5 and Beyond – Add Preschool Aged Children**

In three years, the original language immersion children will be entering Head Start (for children ages three to five), where they will continue to engage in language immersion for at least half of the day.

By the time our language immersion children are ready for Kindergarten (five years from now) the tribe will have had time to establish a Tribal School, a charter school, or develop another means to extend language immersion beyond early childhood. In the meantime, the tribe will need to plan for expanding immersion opportunities and will need to seek additional resources to extend immersion for elementary school aged children. One thing that the tribe must keep in mind as we move forward, is that support from parents, community, tribal government, and leaders of the language revitalization movement is absolutely essential. No one person, group, or entity within the community will be able to do this alone.
• **Ojibwe language and culture must be the very foundation of our tribal early childhood programs and services.**

Over the course of seven years, the Red Cliff Early Childhood Center developed a culturally-based curriculum, called *Naandagikendan*, which means “seek to learn”. Parents, elders, and community were involved in creating the curriculum, which is unique to Red Cliff, and already reflects some of the stories, traditional methods, and approaches to learning identified by community members in this study. Yet, it is clear that much more needs to be done. Given the varied knowledge, experience, training, and comfort level of early childhood staff in using the language, telling our stories, and engaging in traditional teaching/learning methods, implementation of the curriculum has been inconsistent. Some teachers are using the curriculum as the basic foundation for interactions with children; some are using it sporadically as an “add on”. In order to ensure consistency in using the curriculum, the Early Childhood Center will modify existing teacher/classroom observation tools to assess level of Ojibwe language use in the classroom by teachers, children, and parents. In addition, the center will revise the lesson plan monitoring system ensure consistent use of the culturally-based curriculum as the basis for teaching and learning throughout the center.

An effective and feasible method to enhance Ojibwe language proficiency of Red Cliff early childhood teachers is through mentoring by a fluent speaker in the classroom. Most of the early childhood teachers have already taken at least two Ojibwe language courses, which is helpful, but that only goes so far in terms of developing fluency. The language speaker will serve as a mentor in the classroom.
through daily interaction and modeling. Teachers will have the opportunity to learn right along with the children.

Another way to promote early childhood teachers knowledge of language and cultural teachings is through teacher/staff development. The center will continue to collaborate with post secondary educational institutions, such as the University of Minnesota – Duluth, to provide culturally relevant teacher training opportunities.

- **Tribal government officials and leaders must declare the urgent, critical need to preserve our language and culture or we will cease to exist as a people.**

The Red Cliff Tribal Council adopted the following mission statement in 1994:

> To promote, plan and provide for the health, welfare, education, environmental protection, cultural preservation and economic well being of Tribal Members and to protect Treaty Rights now and in the future.

That is all well and good, but since 1994 not much has changed, and with each passing year we continue to lose our language, our elders, and along with them the deep knowledge they possess. If tribal government officials believe our language and culture is worth saving, they will officially proclaim to the people and to all tribal programs that serve our people that it really is a priority. Over the years, I have observed that it often takes tribal council action in order for some people in the community, particularly “program” people, to support any effort or cause. I believe part of the reason is that many people are comfortable with the status quo, due largely to internalized oppression. Regardless of whether the Red Cliff tribe is willing to proclaim our language is worth saving or not, the revitalization effort will continue. While other tribes, such as the
Blackfeet in Montana, have had success with language revitalization without tribal government support, in the case of Red Cliff, support from the tribe would be helpful.

- *Leaders of the Red Cliff language and culture revitalization effort must continue to move forward.*

A few years ago, a tiny group of community members started getting together informally to speak the language. This small group spearheaded the work of language and culture revitalization in the community. The language committee made some strides, including coordinating the first ever community language summit in 2003, from which a tribal strategic plan was developed. The main components of the strategic plan include:

1. Language Immersion and Restoration
2. Home Use Program
3. Master/Apprentice Program
4. Ojibwe Language Teacher Training
5. Ojibwemowin Gabeshiwin (Language immersion camps)

Due to an almost total lack of resources, only small pieces of the overall tribal strategic plan have come to fruition. For example, for many years the tribe has collaborated with UW-Stevens Point to provide the annual language immersion camp at Raspberry. More recently, the First American Prevention Center began hosting a language table, where community members come together once per week to speak the language. However, the tribe does not have the human or financial resources to carry out the plan in its entirety at this time. This is why language revitalization must become imbedded within
the fabric of the community’s programs and institutions. It is evident there is a glaring need for additional resources (human and financial).

- **Accessing Resources**

  We as tribal members are painfully aware of the lack of financial resources tribal-wide; this is nothing new. Our tribe is by far the most impoverished in the state of Wisconsin; therefore, as with all tribal operations we must continually seek outside resources, be it federal grants or private foundations (with or without strings) in order to carry out the work of the tribe, by and for the people. In the case of language revitalization, the work can be institutionalized to the degree possible. Yet the reality is that most funding sources have strings. Funds are necessary from somewhere to bring fluent speakers into the community. If language revitalization is a tribal priority, it would be extremely helpful for the tribe to identify a person, group, or entity to seek additional financial resources for this purpose. One suggestion to the tribe would be to offer a contingency, or payment for grant writing services contingent upon actual funds awarded, as a viable way to seek additional resources without having to come up with upfront costs.

**Conclusion**

As this study comes to a close, this part of my journey ends, yet another is just beginning as I realize there is still so much to do. I challenge each one of us as Red Cliff community members to ask ourselves if we truly want to save our language. If so, we must act now, before it becomes too late. If we do nothing, life will continue in Red Cliff, and we will eventually become, as will our children and grandchildren, a community of brown white people. But if, we as individuals, families, and a
community as a whole, really believe our Ojibwe language and cultural knowledge is beautiful, powerful, and important enough to save in Red Cliff, we must act now, before it is too late. We must do so for our ancestors. We must do so for our children. We must do so for seven generations yet to come.
REFERENCES


Human Subjects Code Number: 0212S38781

The Teachings of Our Ancestors:
A Vision of Ojibwe Language and Cultural Revitalization
For Young Children in the Red Cliff Community

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to be in a research study of Ojibwe language and culture focused on young children in the Red Cliff community. You were selected as a possible participant because of your knowledge and expertise in Ojibwe language and culture. You will be asked questions about what young children need to know, learn, and understand about their language and culture, from prenatal through age five. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Delores Gokee-Rindal, doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, Red Cliff Early Childhood Center Administrator, and Red Cliff Tribal Member.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore what young Ojibwe children (prenatal through age five) in the community of Red Cliff should know, learn and understand about their language and culture. This will be determined through interviews with elders and others with language knowledge and expertise.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1) Agree to answer interview questions about what young Ojibwe children need to know, learn and understand about their language and culture by age five.
2) Spend approximately 1-2 hours with researcher to answer these questions.
3) Agree to be audio taped by researcher to record responses.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has one potential risk: participants may experience a feeling of emotional loss if they delve into their perceptions on the extent of language loss in the Red Cliff community, during the open-ended interview. The researcher will terminate the interview at any point at the request of the participant, or if the researcher feels the interview is becomes emotionally painful for the participant. Some level of grief associated with historical oppression of language and culture is expected. The likelihood of the risk being too emotionally painful for participants is minimal.
Participants may choose to not answer any question.

The benefits to participation far outweigh the risk: the results of this study will be used to strengthen the language and culture revitalization efforts at the Red Cliff Early Childhood Center, and the entire community.

Compensation:

There will be no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. If the results of the study are published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify participants, unless written consent is obtained from participants. Research records will be kept in a locked file by the researcher for a period of five years following completion of the study; only the researcher will have access to the tape recordings and transcripts of interviews.

I prefer the following to be used in this study (participants please check one):

- [ ] Permission for researcher to use my real name, or
- [ ] Preference for researcher to use a pseudonym, instead of my real name.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask now, or contact the researcher at any time in person or by mail, phone, or email: Delores Gokee-Rindal, Route 1, Box 94, Bayfield, WI 54814, phone (715) 779-3387, email deegokee@yahoo.com. Student advisor is: Dr. Tom Peacock, University of Minnesota, phone (218) 726-6898, email tpeacock@d.umn.edu.

IF you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, contact Research Subjects’ Advocate line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; telephone (612) 625-1650.
You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _________________________________  Date ________________

Signature of Investigator _____________________  Date ________________
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The purpose of this study is to explore what young Ojibwe children (prenatal through age five) from the community of Red Cliff might know, learn, and understand about their language and culture. The process of doing this study may contribute to the larger movement in the Red Cliff community to reclaim indigenous knowledge.

You were recommended by Red Cliff community members to participate in this study because you are recognized as someone who is knowledgeable about our language and culture.

1) Tell me about a time in your life when you started learning the language and traditional cultural teachings.

2) Tell me a story about what babies might know before they are born, while still in the womb, about Ojibwe language and traditional cultural knowledge.

3) Tell me a story about what traditional cultural teachings and Ojibwe language knowledge might be important for babies and young children to learn, from the time they are born to around the age of five.

4) Think about a young child who you know can understand and speak the language. Tell me about how they might have come to understand the language and traditional cultural teachings?

5) Tell me about your dream or vision for the future and how we as a community can create a new generation of speakers?
APPENDIX C

RED CLIFF TRIBAL COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION # 12-02-03-A

RESOLUTION PERTAINING TO SUPPORTING THE RED CLIFF OJIBWE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE RESTORATION RESEARCH PROJECT proposed by Delores Gokee-Rindal, Red Cliff Tribal Member, Red Cliff Early Childhood Center Administrator, and doctoral student at the University of Minnesota.

WHEREAS: The Red Cliff Tribal Council is the governing body of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin; and,

WHEREAS: The mission of the Red Cliff Tribal Council (adopted December 5, 1994) is “To promote, plan and provide for the health, welfare, education, environmental protection, cultural preservation and economic well being of Tribal Members and to protect Treaty Rights now and in the future”; and

WHEREAS: The Red Cliff Tribal Council recognizes the severity of language and culture loss in the Red Cliff community; and

WHEREAS: The Red Cliff Tribe views efforts to retain language and culture in the Red Cliff community as being critical to our cultural survival as indigenous people; and

WHEREAS: The Red Cliff Tribe recognizes that steps must be taken immediately by leaders and community members to promote and ensure language and culture restoration in the Red Cliff community, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Red Cliff Tribal Council fully endorses the proposed research project by Delores Gokee-Rindal, a member of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, to conduct research focused on what young Ojibwe children need to know, learn and understand about their language and culture, through interviews with elders and others with language and cultural knowledge.
CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned Secretary of the Tribal Council of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewas, a federally recognized Indian Tribe, hereby certify that the Tribal Council is composed of 9 members, of whom 7, constituting a quorum, were present at a meeting thereof duly called, noticed, and convened, held on the 2nd day of December, 2002, and foregoing resolution was adopted at said meeting by an affirmative vote of 8 members and that said resolution has not been rescinded or amended in any way.

Dennis J. Soulier
Secretary, Red Cliff Tribal Council