

# LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

An Investigation into the Loss and Revitalization of First Nations Languages in Manitoba:  
Perspectives of First Nations Educators

By:

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to utilize the perspectives of research participants to address language loss in First Nations schools in Manitoba. The current status of some Aboriginal [Indigenous] languages are considered to be endangered (Statistics Canada, 2016). Most may be lost if we do not address this critical state. Indigenous languages are vital to the culture and knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples. The *Indigenous Languages Act* (2019) is now legislation after having passed its third reading through parliament. This Act gives hope for much needed funding to implement strategies for retaining and revitalizing Indigenous languages. It is hoped that the Indigenous Languages Act will help to empower Indigenous people to promote the worldview that highlights the importance of the Indigenous cultures and languages. It is important to note that the colonization process has had the most detrimental effect on language loss (Kirkness, 1998). As Kirkness had indicated in her 1998 collection of talks and papers: The intergenerational impacts of the residential school era have seriously disrupted the transmission of Indigenous languages. The power of government systems imposed over Indigenous peoples has also severely affected the retention of Indigenous languages. These impacts have resulted in the last two to three generations of families no longer speaking their Indigenous languages. Documents and reports such as *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (1971), *First Nations Control of First Nations Education* (2010), and *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015) with its ninety-four calls to action, emphasize the importance of language retention. Books, journals, and articles by Indigenous authors such as Tuhiwai-Smith, Kirkness, Gehl, Wilson and recent dissertations by Indigenous authors, Okemaw (2019), Fontaine (2018), Scott (2017), Murdock (2016), and Peden (2011), and non-Indigenous allies, Shackel (2017), Smith (2013), Arnett and Mady (2013) all contribute to the information on the

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impact of colonization and recommendations for addressing these impacts so Indigenous peoples can achieve *mino pimatis(z)iiwin* (journey of good life).

*Keywords: colonization, decolonization, Indigenous people, language loss, language retention, language revitalization, mino pimatis(z)iiwin, Anishinaabe, Anishinaabemowin, Ojibway, Aboriginal*

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*Meegwetch di-na Manitou szhikgoo nookoomuk ta-goh nimishoomissuk, mush-kwan-da-meen key-mee-szhee-yaht chi key-szhi-bee-aman oowa muzinaagun.* (I say thank you to the creator, grandmothers, and grandfathers for giving me strength to focus and finish writing this thesis). *Ni-na-na-koom-uk akina awee-ah ka-gee bi-ga-geez-omit chi gee-szhi-bee-i-gee-yun.* (I acknowledge and give gratitude to all those that encouraged me to finish my writing).

I want to say *kitchi meegwetch* (gratitude and thank you) to all of my family. It was the love, wisdom, and strength of my paternal grandparents Flora and Andrew, and my parents Lena and Clarence whose teachings taught me to be a proud *Anishinaabekwe* and a fluent speaker of the *Anishinaabe* language. They are now in the spirit world but I carry them in my heart and carry their teachings of the ways of the *Anishinaabek*.

*Meegwetch ga di-nuuk ni-miss-say-uk, ni-say-uk, szhigoo ni-shee-ma(n)suk.* (Thank you to my older sisters, older brothers, and younger siblings). My three older sisters, one who is in the spirit world, and two older brothers all attended residential school until 1970 when it closed. My younger sister and four younger brothers, including me attended residential day school. We are all survivors. I want to acknowledge all of my sisters and brothers for their strength to live life to the best and thank them for all their love. We are all supportive of one another and follow our traditional *Anishinaabe* way of life.

*Meegwetch di-nuuk Ni-na-bam, dabinoochjeemuk, szhigoo noo(n)shansuk. Ween-a(w)a taso-i-gishaap wan-geh onish-ka-(w)an. Zshan-i-muk apitchi.*

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(I say thank you to my husband, my children, and my grandchildren. They are the reason I wake up every morning. I love and care for them dearly). It continues to be a wonderful journey with my husband and our four grown children who have given us the joys of five grandchildren. They are all the light of my life, the reason I greet each new day and give thanks to the creator, grandmothers, and grandfathers for gifting me with the best husband, awesome children, and precious grandchildren. As I reached closer to the end of my thesis, much of my time was taken away from my husband who was so very patient and understanding. My children were very encouraging and showed the same patience and understanding like their dad. My older grandchildren were busy with school work just like their *kookum*.

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# LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

## Chapter 1

### Nature of the Study

This study, will examine factors related to loss and revitalization of an Indigenous language in a First Nations school in Manitoba. The loss of Indigenous languages in Canada has been a growing concern and is well documented in reports such as the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) and *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015). This phenomenon is also evident in many Indigenous communities across the world. An example would be the language loss in Indigenous populations in New Zealand and Australia as their elders are not passing the Indigenous language on to the next generation (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011, p.195). It is a pattern that is evident in the First Nations communities in Manitoba (Manitoba First Nations Resource Centre, 2013).

In this study, I will be focusing on my language *Anishinaabemowin* (referred to as Ojibway in the English language) also referred to as *Saulteaux* in some First Nations communities. I will use *Anishinaabemowin* at times with English translation. It is important to do so as a form of honoring, valuing and respecting my first language. At times words in my language have a more profound meaning than can be expressed in the English language. I am also writing and using *Anishinaabemowin* for those who are fluent and may understand, or are interested in the *Anishinaabe* language.

I will be using the term *Anishinaabe* to refer to Ojibway, *Anishinaabemowin* to refer to the Ojibway language, and First Nations to refer to the Indigenous peoples of the five language groups in Manitoba. Other terms used to identify Indigenous peoples will be Indigenous, Indian, Aboriginal, and Native depending on the sources from scholars and writers.

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The link between culture, language, positive self-identity, and *mino pimatis(z)iiwin* (journey of good life) is well recognized by the First Nations people and verbalized on a national stage by many First Nations leaders such as Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chiefs, Mercredi (1991-1997), Fontaine (1997-2000, 2003-2009), Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), Grand Chief, Nepinak (2011-2017). As a First Nations educator, I am confident that when First Nations children understand their language and culture, they have a positive outlook, feel good about themselves, and are more likely to do better in school and with life. The school is a gathering place for all children to learn and should provide an education that teaches and supports their language and culture. This is echoed in the document, *First Nations Control of First Nations Education* (2010):

Unless the child learns about the forces which shape him; the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being. Indian culture and values have a unique place in the history of mankind. The Indian child who learns about his heritage will be proud of it. The lessons he learns in school, his whole life experience, should reinforce and contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian. (Assembly of First Nations, 2010, p. 31)

As a First Nation scholar, activist, and fluent *Anishinaabe* speaker working with many of the Manitoba First Nations communities, I identify with many of the dominating factors of colonization which have resulted in ongoing language loss for First Nations people. As stated by Gillies and Battiste (2013), “Although all languages change and evolve over time naturally, Indigenous languages have suffered immeasurable losses from common enemies - colonization and official government policies and practices supporting only official languages” (p.169).

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Therefore, it is important to identify that the first reason for language loss is embedded in the history of colonization.

First Nations people have been, and continue to be oppressed by government systems that distribute funding for education and health without adequate First Nations consultation. As a result of this type of control, First Nations culture and language practices are often set aside to comply with provincial curricula as mandated in signed agreements between Indigenous Services Canada (formerly known as Indian Affairs) and First Nations. Kirkness (2013) stated, “The Department of Indian Affairs had a strict policy that we were to adhere to the provincial curriculum” (p.62). Such directives have impacted the Indigenous languages. Battiste (2013) expressed the importance of language by stating, “Indigenous languages are the most significant factor in the survival of Indigenous knowledge and culture” (p.146).

A critical aspect of colonization is the legacy of residential schools which played a dominant role in language loss within the culture whereby churches were enabled by the government to systematically remove children from their families. This is identified by Tuhiwai Smith (2012) when she wrote,

Native children in Canada were sent to residential schools at an age designed to systematically destroy their language and memories of home. There is a growing body of testimony from First Nations people in Canada which tells of years of abuse, neglect, and viciousness meted out to young children by teachers and staff in schools run by various religious denominations. These forms of discipline were supported by paternalistic and racist policies and legislation; they were accepted by white communities as necessary conditions which had to be met if Indigenous people wanted to become citizens (of their own lands). These forms of discipline affected people physically, emotionally,

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linguistically and culturally. They were designed to destroy every last remnant of alternative ways of knowing and living, to obliterate collective identities and memories and to impose a new order. (p. 72)

This resulted in the intergenerational disruption of transmission of First Nations linguistic, cultural, and spiritual practices. This dark component of Canadian history occurred for generations with the full effects only now being acknowledged and realized by the broader Canadian society. In the apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to Indigenous peoples who attended the Indian residential school system, he acknowledged the wrongs of the residential school system (Government of Canada, 2010).

A second reason for language loss in Canada is the fact that the Federal Government has required the implementation of the provincial curriculum in First Nations communities' schools downplaying the importance of the First Nations languages. This has long been a part of history as Kirkness (1998) quoted a Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1897:

Instruction of Indians in the vernacular is not only of no use to them but detrimental to the cause of education and civilization and will not be permitted in any Indian school. It is believed that if any Indian vernacular is allowed to be taught on Indian reservations it will prejudice the pupil as well as his parents against the English language. This language which is good enough for a white man or a black man ought to be good enough for the red man. (p. 3)

The funding choices and decisions made by the Government of Canada continue to impact First Nations, resulting in severe lack of funding for a comprehensive First Nations language retention and revitalization strategy throughout Manitoba and Canada. While it could be argued that

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language could be learned without funding, when the language has been purposefully eradicated, a plan for revitalization must be developed and funded by the federal government.

A third reason is the fact that Canada has only recognized English and French as official languages through the 1969 *Official Languages Act*, further contributing to the decline of Indigenous languages throughout Canada to the point of near extinction for many language groups (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2021). Kirkness's book *Aboriginal Languages* published in 1998, over 2 decades ago, suggested that legislation needs to be priority. Kirkness (1998) stated, "What we need is for the government of Canada to acknowledge its legal and moral obligations to preserve, revitalize, and maintain Aboriginal languages for our current use and for the use of future generations" (p.25). It was not until 2015, that the new Liberal government proposed Bill S-212, which is now the *Indigenous Language Act*, for the advancement of Aboriginal languages of Canada providing hope for both legislative protection and the opportunity of assured funding for retention and revitalization for Indigenous languages (Parliament of Canada, 2015).

### **The Context for the Study**

The National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Perry Bellegarde, in his opening remarks to the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers meeting in Quebec, August 22, 2017, stated, "Our languages are central to our ceremonies, our relationships to our lands, the animals, to each other, our understandings of our worlds, including the natural world, our stories and our laws" (Assembly of First Nations, 2018, p.1). As an *Anishinaabekwe* (Ojibway woman), *Omama ima* (a mother), *kookum* (grandmother), *kikinamagaa* (educator) I know the National Chief's statement to be true as I saw this practiced by my parents and grandparents. Their use of Indigenous language framed and formed their whole way of life. It is critical that students learn



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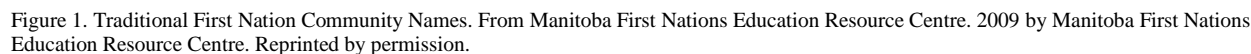
the language of their community in order to use those understandings in the context of their whole way life.

In my home territory, Manitoba, Canada there are *naanan* (five) distinct First Nations *kiigidoowinon* (spoken languages) (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) to view larger maps follow link <https://mfnerc.org/community-map/>. The names used in the English language are Cree, Ojibway, Ojibway-Cree, Denesuline and Dakota. The Ojibway-Cree is spoken by First Nations who are located in the northeastern area of Manitoba, also known as the Island Lake area. The Cree, also known as the Inninew, are located throughout the mid-northern and upper-northern areas of the province. The Denesuline, also referred to as the Dene, are located in the furthest Northwest and mid-Northern part of Manitoba, just below Churchill. The Dakota, sometimes referred to as Sioux, live in the south western areas of Manitoba. The Ojibway, also known as the *Anishinaabe*, live in the central, southern, and eastern areas of Manitoba. All of these five First Nations groups in Manitoba are in danger of losing their Indigenous languages. Therefore:

We need to place great emphasis on teaching our languages. We need to have immersion programs in Cree, Ojibwe, Dene, Oji-Cree and Dakota. There are 55 Aboriginal languages in this country; only three are strong. The other 52 are in crisis and some are nearing extinction. Language is the repository to all we are as First Nations People.

(Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre, 2012, p.2)

The Assembly of First Nations (2017) conducted a series of Indigenous language engagement sessions across Canada to gather information on the state of Indigenous languages. The main purpose was to address the urgency of language preservation. At the conclusion, the report stated, “Indigenous languages preservation, revitalization and education is now on the Government of Canada’s legislative and policy agenda with the intention that our languages will



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**Figure 2 English Names and Locations of First Nations Communities**

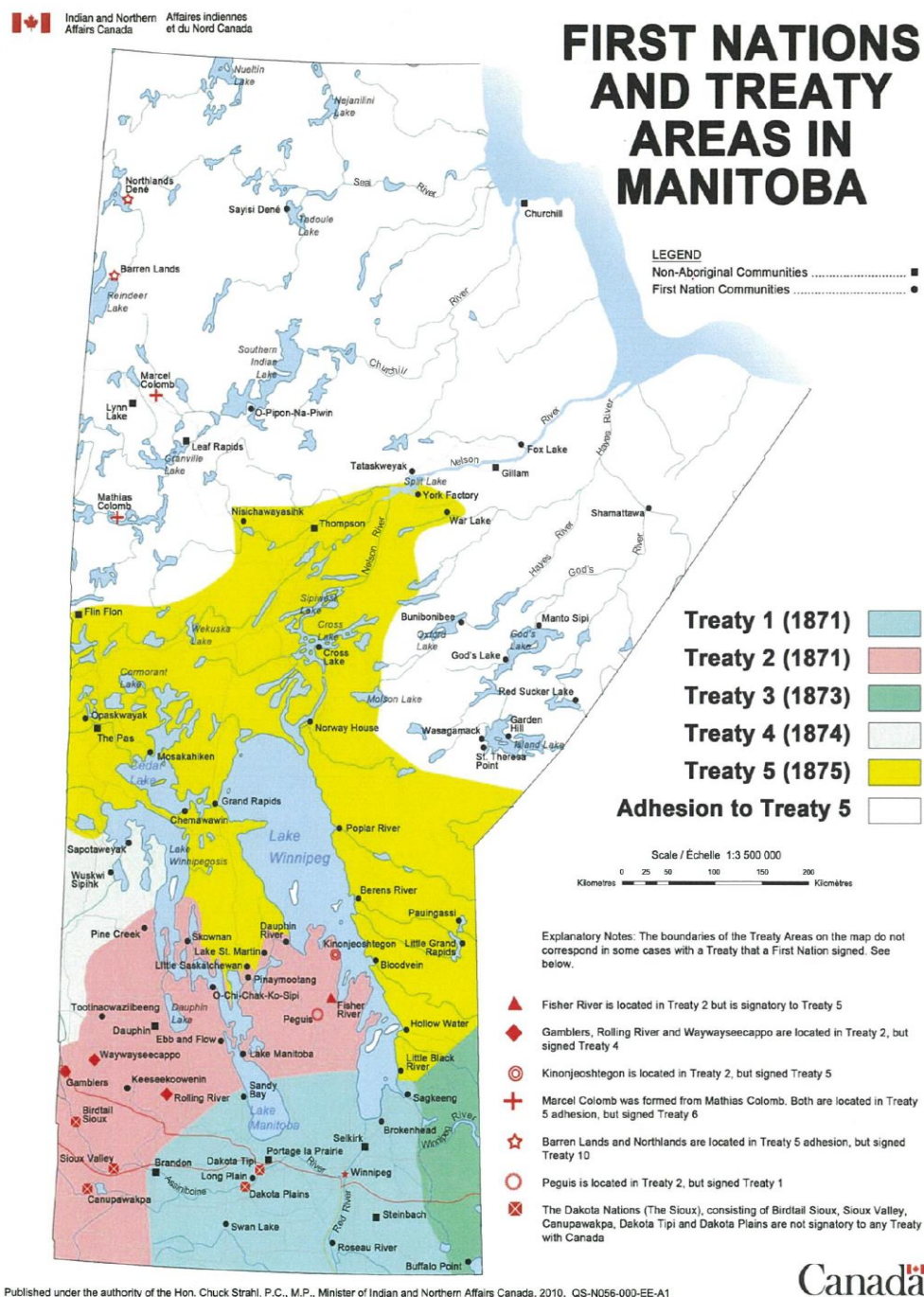


Figure 2. First Nation and Treaty Areas in Manitoba. Published under the authority of the Hon. Chuck Strahl, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010, QS-N056-000-EE-A1

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be maintained now and into the future” (Assembly of First Nations, 2017, p. 2). Indigenous language loss is a reality with many complex factors, however, Indigenous groups are now giving voice to the value of the ancestral languages. The historical legacy of devaluing and loss of Indigenous languages is now being recognized throughout Canada as indicated by the official apology from the federal government to First Nations in 2008 (Government of Canada, 2010).

Additional research is required on how to teach Indigenous languages in First Nations schools as this is the avenue to reach most of the children in an Indigenous community. As stated by Arthurson (2014), “There is a lack of reporting about the impact on language retention using this [classroom instruction] method,” (p. 6). Areas that may be further explored include the language of preschoolers when they enter into the school system, the use of First Nations language in the early, middle, and high school levels, or throughout the school in general. It is also important to look at the types of programs required such as language as a subject, bilingual programs, immersion programs, language nests, and training of First Nations language teachers.

### **Problem Statement/Research Question**

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence language loss but more importantly, what can be done about the language loss from the perspectives of three First Nations educators in a First Nations school in Manitoba. Specifically, the study addresses the following research question: *What are the factors identified by the participants that lead to language loss in a First Nations school and what can they do to reverse the trend of language loss?* Sharing their stories may reveal more ways and ideas of how to promote language use as well as uncover barriers that may need to be addressed. The reason for focusing on First Nations educators is due to their fluency and understanding of both

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*Anishinaabemowin* and *Shaganashiimoong* (English) along with their lived experiences in the education process.

In this study, First Nations educators have been chosen for the following reasons:

- (a) interest in participants who are fluent in *Anishinaabemowin* as well as *Shaganashiimoong*,
- (b) First Nations educators' knowledge of instruction and language pedagogy who know the structures and structural differences of both languages, and (c) grassroots people who have a community perspective and are able to think and alternate between both languages. The participants may also have lived experiences from residential school sharing important information on the impact of colonization and language loss as a survivor.

### **Indigenous and Qualitative Methods**

I will use a qualitative research design for this study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), qualitative research is descriptive, naturalistic, has concern with process, and is inductive. The inquirer is "interested in how different people make sense of their lives" (p.7). As a researcher, I am interested in the perspectives of the First Nations educators about language loss. Since our language is tied to our culture, a qualitative approach as described above is best suited to explore the research questions.

In this qualitative study the researcher is concerned about the nature of the issue, its relational focus, including life stories and lived perspectives. This is particularly relevant for this study as the participants will have knowledge about the residential school system as well as their perspectives on the *Anishinaabe* and English language. As Wilson (2008) stated, "We are beginning to articulate our own research paradigms and to demand that research conducted in our communities follows our codes of conduct and honours our systems of knowledge and worldviews" (p.8). As an *Anishinaabekwe*, fluent speaker, and knowledge keeper following

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Indigenous methodology it is crucial that First Nations individuals are recognized as credible sources of information in the research of language loss, especially when it is their language.

A narrative research design will be another qualitative research methodology used for this study. This method captures the stories of the lived lives of individuals and documents these stories (Creswell, 2008). All the participants in this study carry their own story in relation to language loss and the importance of preservation. This research is an opportunity to document their stories both as their own personal lived experiences and their perspectives as professional educators with expertise in First Nations language learning. Their knowledge is invaluable to understand the issues of language retention and revitalization. The narrative method is also in line with the oral traditions of Indigenous peoples who passed on the Indigenous knowledge from one generation to the next through storytelling.

In this study, I will be conducting open-ended, semi-structured in-depth interviews with three First Nations educators who speak fluently in *Anishinaabemowin* and *Shaganashiimoong*, and who have expertise of five or more years in language programming. Purposeful sampling will be used, which is the selection of people or sites that can best help understand a phenomenon (Creswell, 2008). I will document (via a tape recorder) their perspectives and experiences related to strategies that they recommend to enhance *Anishinaabemowin* and possibly provide insight on the writing of the First Nations language for retention and revitalization. A more detailed plan for participant recruitment and selection, data collection, and data analysis will be provided in the methodology section in chapter three.

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As an Indigenist<sup>1</sup> researcher, I will also be using Indigenous methodology, methods that are inherent to me as an Indigenous person, the use of my language, following the ways of my culture, and honouring Indigenous self-determination (Gehl, 2017; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Absolon 2011; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous methodology will be used to both frame this research and to analyze data collected from an Indigenist approach.<sup>2</sup> Inherent within this worldview is analyzing and deconstructing the negative effects of colonization. This practice includes documenting, understanding, contextualizing, and saying truthfully why things are the way they are today from our own Indigenous perspectives. In this study it will be First Nations language speakers who provide the most meaningful and relevant recommendations to guide language retention and revitalization in First Nations schools.

As an *Anishinaabekwe*, following Indigenous methodology I will use the seven sacred teachings to guide my research. *Maanaji'in* (Respect) is how I will treat everyone in this study. I will uncover *debwemowin* (truth) of Indigenous language loss as it pertains to one First Nation community in Manitoba. I will have *zoongide'eein* (courage) to face the realities of what has happened to our people. I will use *gagaatisiwin* (honesty) and be transparent with all stakeholders including community, participants, and the academy. As researcher, I will practice *dabasenimowin* (humility) and not put myself above anyone else. I will show *zagi'idiwin* (love) to the participants of this research and I will seek *gikendaasowin* (wisdom) of the participants through their lived experiences.

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<sup>1</sup>Indigenist – as defined by Gehl (2017) is placing Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing at the core (p.31).

<sup>2</sup> Indigenist approach – Using Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing in a manner that is useful and supportive (Gehl, 2017).



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### Definition of Terms

There are terms that I will be using throughout my research that are relevant to the history and current circumstances in understanding the concepts of language loss for Indigenous peoples. It is important to clarify these terms. I will give the Canadian Oxford dictionary (Barber, 2004) definition for each English term and Indigenous knowledge of the *Anishinaabe* language for the Indigenous terms.

**Colonization:** Colonize is the root word meaning to establish a colony or colonies (in a country or area) or (of one country or society, etc.) impose its culture on (another).

Colonization for Indigenous peoples has been and continues to be confinement and policies of the western Eurocentric system. A concentrated effort to eradicate the language and cultural values of Indigenous peoples (Gehl; 2017, Tuhiwai-Smith; 2012, Absolon; 2011, Wilson; 2008).

**Decolonization:** Decolonize is the root word meaning (of a state) withdraw from (a colony), leaving it independent. Decolonization for Indigenous peoples is the recognition and value of the language, culture, and who we are as a human race (Absolon, 2011).

The process of engaging with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012).

**Language Loss:** Language is the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in an agreed way. Loss is the act or an instance of losing; the state of being lost. Language loss for Indigenous peoples refers to endangered or near extinction of their languages. (Battiste, 2013; Kirkness 1998, 2013)



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**Indigenous:** Indigenous means originating naturally in a region or (of people) born in a region. The term Indigenous is used to identify the original inhabitants of a country, in this context, Canada (Wilson, 2008).

***Anishinaabe:*** There is no definition for this word in the dictionary. To define the meaning of *Anishinaabe* we must use Indigenous knowledge of the language, but I will also use English translations with the understanding that the words may not be exactly the direct translation. *Anish* – to be of the star people, *Ni shi na* - to lower, *nabe* - a human race Therefore, *Anishinaabe* means people of the stars who were lowered to earth from what is known as the universe in English. (Elder teachings)

***Anishinaabemowin:*** As with the word, *Anishinaabe*, we must use Indigenous knowledge of the language to define *Anishinaabemowin*. *Anishinaabemowin* is the language of the *Anishinaabe*. *Anish na* – means making a statement – speaking the language of the star people. The last part of the word *mowin* can be defined as, “to cry out the sound you make as you breathe out the oxygen from within your body”, in English this is defined as speaking words. (Elders teachings)

***Mino Pimatis(z)iiwin:*** *Mino pimatis(z)iiwin* has often been defined in the English language as “living a good life.” In the Indigenous knowledge of the language the word carries within it what is known as philosophical meaning in English. Meaning that *mino pimatis(z)iiwin* casts out many forms of interpretations and therefore cannot be simply defined as living a good life, it is much more than that. “*Mino*” meaning good, the right way and “*pima*” meaning travelling the path, road, journey, “*s(z)iiwin*” meaning almost like the fluids flowing within your body, life form. (Elders teachings)

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The definitions of the *Anishinaabe* words are more elaborate in the *Anishinaabe* language, the English translations are only a short version of defining each word.

### Significance of Study

First Nations language loss has long been recognized as stated by Kirkness (1998), “Our Elders have long been concerned about the loss of our ancestral languages. They believe that the retention of the languages is vital to our survival as nations of Aboriginal people” (p. 3). However, information and perspectives from grassroots First Nations community members on First Nations language revitalization and retention are lacking within academic publications (Okemaw, 2019). This study will promote grassroots solutions to retaining and revitalizing First Nations languages in Manitoba. It is my hope that this study will empower First Nations people to embrace their languages by providing a roadmap for First Nations to retain and revitalize their languages. Most importantly, this study will provide educators greater insight on the challenges of retaining and revitalizing the First Nations languages faced by First Nations learners being educated in predominantly English based education settings in a First Nations school. The study is timely given the dire state of First Nations languages in Manitoba. This study will acknowledge the recommendations of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2015) as a step towards the decolonization of First Nations in Manitoba. If there is no concerted effort for retention and revitalization, First Nations languages will continue to slide towards extinction.

This study will benefit First Nations children, parents, and educators in First Nations communities if there are strategies put in place. This research may also have implications of promoting a better partnership with education consultants, curriculum developers and those involved with the training of *Anishinaabe* language teachers in First Nations communities throughout Manitoba. This study will also contribute to intergenerational strengthening by

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bringing some understanding of language loss to families and education systems in First Nations communities. As well as, promoting the understanding of the importance of retaining the First Nations languages.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have provided information on how I will be conducting research with First Nations educators and the importance of their perspectives on language loss. It is crucial to find avenues for retention and revitalization for First Nations languages to survive. I have identified the five Indigenous language groups in Manitoba but will focus on *Anishinaabemowin* for this study. I have also provided three specific reasons for Indigenous language loss that I will be focusing on for this research study. They include the impact of colonization, the federal government's implementation of the provincial curriculum resulting in lack of recognition of the Indigenous languages and knowledge systems, and the impact of the official languages act. The methodology for this study includes a qualitative/narrative research design, and Indigenous methodologies which include the seven sacred teachings.

This is a time of reclamation and reconciliation with the possibility of Bill S-212 (Bill C-91) now known as the *Indigenous Languages Act* (2019) which was assented June 2019. The importance of research on Indigenous language retention and revitalization is critical. In the following chapters, I have positioned myself in greater detail in relation to this research and have reviewed the relevant literature on this topic.

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## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

**Positionality.** Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested that researchers must “acknowledge that no matter how hard you try, you cannot divorce your research and writing from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe and what you value” (p.38). In 2002, Steinhauer wrote “before data collection is even considered we must introduce ourselves to the community – not by just telling people our name or where we live, but by giving personal information about ourselves” (p.78). Prior to presenting the literature review I will position myself in relation to this research. In a qualitative research study, the researcher can position him or herself in relation to the research he or she is conducting. As a researcher, and proud First Nations *Anishinaabekwe* (First Nations woman), I acknowledge that sharing information about myself, including my values and beliefs is a way I can position myself in relation to this research.

**Defining literature and literacy.** What is the standard common eurocentric definition of literature and literacy? According to the Canadian Oxford dictionary (Barber, 2004) eurocentric is defined as focusing on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world; implicitly regarding European culture as preeminent. The Canadian Oxford dictionary (Barber, 2004) also defines literacy as having two meanings including: 1. The ability to read and write and, 2. Competence or knowledge in a specified area. Who is deemed to be literate is often concluded from a western eurocentric perspective. Therefore, as part of this literature review, I will expand the definition of literacy and literature to include a First Nations perspective.

I acknowledge the importance of published and peer reviewed literature within western academia. I also acknowledge that there are First Nations perspectives that define literacy and literature from a First Nations worldview. As an *Anishinaabekwe*, I believe in a very broad

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perspective of what is defined as literature, what types of literacy exist, and who I believe to be literate. Hare (2005, cited by Okemaw, 2019) stated, “Their [Indigenous] literacies, which included close readings of landscapes and seasons, must be respected as meaningful ways of life with the potential into the present” (p. 256). Oral communication, just because it is not written does not nullify its legitimacy as a form of literacy. A testament to the value of oral literacy is the well-documented Navajo Code Talkers of WWII. Their language became an unbreakable code because the enemy was not literate in the language and did not have access to becoming literate specifically because it was not written.

Wilson (2008) defines epistemology as, “how we think about or know this reality” (p. 13). Epistemology, from my First Nations perspective, allows me to clarify what I know to be true as I know it. From my First Nations worldview, literacy includes, but is not limited to what is written or what is read, but also includes concepts such as spiritual literacy, land based literacy, relational teachings, and the knowledge of and/or connection to the land. I define relational teachings as all the connections between everything (plants, animals, and humans) that exists. Even though First Nations people may not be able to read or write in the English language, people who speak the First Nations language within my culture are considered very literate. As stated by Johnston (2005):

As rich and full of meaning as may be individual words and expression, they embody only a small portion of the entire stock and potential of tribal knowledge, wisdom, and intellectual attainment; the greater part is deposited in myths, legends, stories, and in the lyrics of chants that make up the tribe’s literature. (p.95)

Someone who is fluent in the First Nations language is likely to have a much higher level of “relational” literacy when measured from a First Nations worldview. Fluency in the First Nations

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language is connected to knowledge systems and survival. For this study, First Nations language knowledge needs to be valued as a recognized source of knowing (Battiste, 2013). The English language concept of literacy is what has negated the perspectives of First Nations languages with its own forms of literacy. In keeping with this understanding, I place considerable weight on what the participants in my study have experienced, knowing there is value, and literacy within their First Nations language.

**Kinship.** It is important to recognize the significance of extended family systems as this strongly relates to the teaching and learning of First Nations languages. One of the things that stays with me as a First Nations person is the kinship of family as always being close and nearby to support and help each other. All of my maternal and paternal grandparents' siblings were my *nookoomuk* (grandmothers) and *mishoomisuk* (grandfathers). Wilson (2008) stated, "Family is seen as utmost importance for many Indigenous people. Family is what holds us as individuals into our communities and nations" (p. 86). As a youngster I travelled with *ni nii ki'ikook* (my parents) *shikwa ni nookoo* (and my grandmother) *shikwa ni mishoomis* (and my grandfather) to visit our many relations throughout the southern *Anishinaabe* regions of Manitoba. Arthurson (2014) stated, "The culture of any nation is embedded within the spoken language, which is used to transmit societal norms and worldview to children," (p.1). As I grew older, when meeting relations, I was always recognized through my parents and grandparents without my formal 'English' name known to them. People recognized me just by looking at me. I now realize, that through my First Nations roots, the importance of this relationship/kinship of family and how it helped me in retaining my language and know my culture (see figure 3 and figure 4). Wilson (2008), stated that relationality is:

That's right, I mean most Indigenous societies will always introduce

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themselves as, “I am Lewis Cardinal, my grandparents are these people, my father is this person, my mother was this person.” They put themselves into an orientation. I think that is a real foundational thing, to say who I am.

Who I am is where I am from, and my relationships. (p.80)

It is in this context that I would like to introduce who I am with my First Nations language, share some of my cultural upbringing and discuss my thoughts and experiences as a fluent *Anishinaabe* speaker.

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**Figure 3 Parents and Grandparents**



On the right are my parents, *Nimama*, Lena and *Baba* Clarence Spence and on the left are my grandparents, *Nookoo* Flora and *Nimishoomis* Andrew Spence

**Figure 4 Great Grandparents**



Nidanikook – On the left are my grandfather's parents and on the right are my grandmother's parents





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**Language translation complexity.** *Aaniin, Dunishinaabe, Wawateh Pinehshsee Ikwe diszhinihkaaz, Makwa dood(t)em, Gaawiikwedaawangaag nindoonjii.* This is an introduction of myself in the *Anishinaabe* language. The translation of the words from *Anishinaabemowin* to English have to be rearranged to be grammatically correct to say “Hello, I am Ojibway, my name is Northern Lights Thunderbird Woman, I am from the bear clan, I am from Sandy Bay.” It is difficult to translate *Anishinaabemowin* into the English language word for word because every *Anishinaabe* word comes with a cultural understanding surrounding the word. The following are brief descriptions of what each *Anishinaabe* word translates in English.

*Aaniin* (acknowledging the presence of or it could be understood as a questioning response of the person(s) who are in the presence of),

*Dunishinaabe* (I am *Anishinaabe*, First Nation/Ojibway),

*Wawateh* (a brightness (light) of colors – as you would envision the northern lights)

*Pinehshsee* (Spirit bird known for its thundering sound-the sound you hear in the spring when the rain and thunder come for the first time)

*Ikwe* (woman) *diszhinihkaaz* (the name I have – my name),

*Makwa* (bear) *dood(t)em* (in my heart/soul/spiritual being – my clan),

*Gaawiikwedaawangaag* (an area where water comes in and out onto the land like a bay),

*nindoonjii* (where I come from).

I am sometimes requested to translate an English word into *Anishinaabemowin* and it is not always an easy task. Some words are easily translated but most often they do not translate the true meaning of the word. This is further exemplified by Johnston (2005) who stated:

When an ‘Anishinaubae’ says that someone is telling the truth, he says

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‘w’ daeb-awae’...the expression is not just a mere confirmation... It is at the same time a philosophical proposition...a speaker casts his words only as far as his vocabulary and his perception will enable him. In so doing the tribe was denying that there was absolute truth; that the best a speaker could achieve and a listener expect was the higher degree of accuracy. Somehow that one expression ‘w’daeb-awae’ set the limits of a single statement as well as setting limits on all speech. (p.94)

In my experience, when *Anishinaabe* words are spoken I envision a picture in my mind that gives me a deeper understanding that goes beyond the word itself. The meaning of the *Anishinaabe* word is often lost when translated into English as some words cannot be truly translated with the same meaning between the *Anishinaabe* and English languages (Johnston, 2005). There is also a different thought process when one has to translate an oral language like *Anishinaabemowin* that does not have a writing system to one that is written and read like the English language.

It can be difficult to comprehend English words and use them in their proper context when the meaning is not fully understood. For example, a parent may tell a teacher that their child cannot read the English words in the book. The child may in fact be able to read the words but what the parent wanted to get across was that their child does not understand what they are reading. To the parent the word “read” comes with a much deeper meaning than the teacher might expect. Larre (2009), an educator, recognized this disconnect and referred to it as English as a Second Dialect (ESD). The following story is an example of misinterpretation because of incorrect use of pronouns:

*Ni mami qwaa isaa* (I remember) a time when *baba* (my dad) was misunderstood in this way using the English language. It was a hot summer day, and I must have been five or

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six years old. I was travelling in the car with my dad as we made our way to the residential school that was built in our community. He told me to wait in the car while he went into the residential school. He was gone for a while because it was very hot waiting in the car. When he came back we left with no mention of why we made the trip. Years later I found out that we had gone to the residential school so I could begin school. My dad had tried to explain that he had brought his child to be registered for school and was denied because of the term he used. He had identified me, “a girl” as a he, “a boy” and was told that there was no room for any males.

Terms such as “she” and “he” do not exist in the *Anishinaabe* language. In the *Anishinaabe* language we use *ikwesance* for a girl, *ikwe* for a woman, *k(w)iisance* for a boy, and *inina* for a man. Kirkness (1998) explains that as First Nations language speakers we make distinctions on the basis of whether nouns, pronouns or verbs are animate or inanimate (p. 48). It seems simple enough to remember that a female is “she” and a male is “he” in the English language but it is not so easy if these words are not part of your language system. I still have to process these two words in my mind when referring to a male or female and still get it wrong at times. This has direct impacts on teaching First Nations language learners with a primarily English based formal education system.

**Dialect.** Translation difficulties can also be encountered when there is a difference in dialect. In the Canadian Oxford dictionary (Barber, 2004) dialect is defined as “a subordinate variety of a language with non-standard vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammar.” This definition is exemplified in a study by Larre (2009) who stated, “Many [Indigenous] students enter school speaking nonstandard dialects of English. Because Standard English is expected in institutions like schools and businesses, mastery of the standard dialect is important for nonstandard dialect-

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speaking students” (p. iii). He further explains that it is not teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), it is teaching English as a Second Dialect (ESD). It needs to be understood that First Nations are Indigenous to this land. Kirkness (1998) stated, “Other people who live in this country do not face the problem that we do with our languages because they can go to their home countries to find their languages. We cannot do that. Our languages are sacred to this land” (p.8). The dominance of English, though it is a foreign language, was a language forced upon First Nations people to learn and speak as part of their conversation skills and everyday living.

Larre (2009), also brings to light the understanding that the use of First Nations languages has been disrupted with the integration of speaking English as an oral language that teaches western eurocentric values that are not always valid to First Nations’ languages or knowledge systems. In articulating an Indigenous paradigm, Wilson (2008) stated,

The mainstream style is to dissect or take ideas apart things to see how they work, and written discourse is a part of this process. Our Indigenous style is to build things up to see how they work. This (is) often requires hands-on or experiential ways of knowing that are difficult to relate in words. So written discourse may or may not help this process. (p.123)

The translation, thinking, and identification of correct grammar are difficult processes when shifting from a First Nations language system to an English language system.

**Oral and not written.** From my early childhood to the present, the teaching of my First Nation language, *Anishinaabemowin*, has been oral with no written format. This is the way all the knowledge that I have attained as an *Anishinaabe* has been taught to me. This is also identified by Battiste (2013), a First Nations Mi’kmaq woman, who stated, “Often oral and symbolic, it [Indigenous knowledge] is transmitted through the structure of Indigenous languages

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and passed onto the next generation by modeling, practice, and animation, rather than through the written word” (p.2). It is for this reason that the writing systems are limited.

Kirkness (1998) identifies that Cree syllabary was designed by a missionary situated in Northern Manitoba (p. 48). Therefore, it is likely through the churches that some of the Indigenous languages began being written using Roman orthography spelling and syllabics as this was how the church books are written in many Manitoba First Nations communities. For example, in the *Anishinaabemowin* language, p/be, p/bi/p/bii, p/bo/p/boo, p/ba/p/baa or syllabic symbols are used to represent the sounds of the language. The need for proper funding of First Nations languages revitalization is eminent as these types of complicated structures simply do not follow the English language system. Funding would provide full time language developers to address the oracy, archiving, possible written or symbolic representations of the language, developing curriculum, and provide opportunities for research projects such as action research to benefit the community.

**Traditional roles of women.** The responsibility of language retention was once a dominant role for Indigenous women. The disruption of colonization and the western eurocentric systems, destroyed much of this vital role. As stated by Norris (2009), “Women have generally been viewed as the traditional keepers of their languages and cultures, customs, and Indigenous knowledge” (p. 319). It is very troublesome to me as an *Anishinabekwe*, *omama iima* (mother), and *kookum* (grandmother) to know the disruption that colonization has caused in fulfilling this great responsibility of teaching my language to my children, grandchildren and family. Another compounding factor of colonization that adds to the disruption of retention of First Nations languages is balancing traditional and mainstream roles of women in providing teachings of economic standards for survival in the eurocentric world (Norris, 2009). In order to sustain a

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standard of living I chose a profession as a school teacher where I taught the curriculum, in English, through the western eurocentric value system, which caused further conflict within me as an *Anishinaabekwe*.

I became a certified educator before becoming a mother, and now a grandmother. It has been a constant battle to teach my language while contending with a dominant English language, and a school system that does not fully recognize First Nations languages nor teach the many values of the culture. As a First Nations educator, I often taught from the lens of a western eurocentric system, as this was how I was taught to become a school teacher in university. It seems, I was following the same route as Kirkness (1998) who stated, “As teachers we were expected to adhere to the “English only” policy in school. Sadly, we never questioned the policy, so the practice of using only English continued” (p. xiv). The main emphasis was on learning how to read and write in the English language. This influence of English only schools on First Nations language loss is also stated by Battiste (2013), “However, success in provincial schools has meant Aboriginal students having to submit to more assimilative paths, compromising their ancestral language and identities connected to their place, and the continuity with elders and communities as schools have been homogenizing and normalizing Eurocentric experiences” (p. 141).

For these reasons, I felt I could never include my *Anishinaabe* language, culture, or world view in my teaching. If I did try to include *Anishinaabe* ways, I felt I was cheating the system and depriving the students from learning. This resulted in a constant inner battle within myself trying to balance my belief system as a First Nations person with following the mandated western eurocentric system. It is an expectation that educators follow the provincial curriculum in all First Nations schools in order to be accredited with the provincial standards

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(Kirkness, 2013). I feel that these conflicting circumstances continue to exist for many First Nations people.

**Cognitive dissonance.** The type of thinking described in the previous paragraph can be termed “cognitive dissonance.” A study by L. Festinger (1962) defined mental stress or discomfort that is experienced by an individual who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time, or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values. This type of mental stress may be an unrecognized underlying issue for many First Nations people. On the one hand, teaching students strong reading and writing skills in English is important for their success within and outside their communities. On the other hand, acknowledging and celebrating students’ culture, language and identity is core to developing self-esteem and confidence whereby success is illusive for many (Assembly of First Nations, 2010). It is important to recognize that this dichotomy exists and needs to be addressed in the best interests of First Nations people. It is difficult to balance the strong influence of the western school systems with building and safeguarding a strong First Nations culture, identity and language base. My grandchildren and adult children are now beginning to recognize the value of their language and culture but they are constantly pressured to be successful in the eurocentric system. They straddle two cultures, the teachings of First Nations and those of the eurocentric system, as I, along with my parents and grandparents, had to do in order to survive in two worlds.

**Storytelling.** Storytelling or storying is how I was taught to share the teachings of *Anishinaabe* knowledge. Arthurson (2012) wrote, “Stories addressed the knowledge the children needed to become contributing members of the community. The stories also carried deeper meanings that the children grasped as they matured and grew in understanding,” (p. 4). Stories

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not only carried teachings, they reinforce and teach the language and the way of life for Indigenous peoples. As a fluent *Anishinaabe* speaker, and knowledge keeper of my culture, I will share a story as a *kookum* (grandmother) to illustrate how I teach my grandchildren their culture and language.

One night as I lay down with my grandchildren at bedtime. I began telling them about their traditional names and how they received them through ceremony. My grandson was intrigued with his name “*Wabishki-kabpo*”. I explained to him that he had been named by a white horse with a horn and wings in English known as a unicorn. This brought him great pride to know he was a “strong standing white horse”. My granddaughter, knew her traditional name quite well as she used it many times through prayer and ceremony. Her name “*Nabanaekiishigook*” came from an elder who described the name as seeing the outline of grandmother moon, half dark and half bright, and the one side that shone bright being her name.

Within these stories come many teachings. For example, the story entails the significance of my granddaughter’s and grandson’s names to make them feel proud of who they are and why they received their names. These stories extend into teaching the significance of honoring their names through ceremony, the importance of the colors given to them with their name, and the significance of respecting who they are. This is just one example of the many ways’ language exemplifies our culture to give meaning to our lives and build self-confidence from an early age. This significant piece may be endangered when language is lost. It is important for them to know their traditional names, to take pride in understanding who they are as First Nations citizens with inherent human and linguistic rights from time immemorial.

As a scholar, I feel empowered to know that academia now supports study and research in Indigenous knowledge and values that encompass First Nations teachings and worldviews. I



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acknowledge this, as this has not always been the case as stated by Battiste (2013), “Storytelling is very much part of the tradition I was raised in, but such narratives were not welcomed and encouraged as good methodology in the academy” (p. 14). It is within the language that the teachings of First Nations’ identity can survive and flourish. As stated in the book, *The Journey of the Spirit of the Red Man*, “The close feelings and connection to the land has been a basis for our perspective on the meaning of and understanding of our relationship to life” (H. Bone, et al. 2012, p.12). First Nations languages come from all the interactions with *aki* (mother earth), a unique form of communication that is oral and holistic to nature. It is important to consider the factors of Indigenous knowledge, value systems, and incorporating oral fluency of First Nation languages for First Nations people in their learning systems. The uniqueness of First Nations teachings and concepts of learning must exist in the formal education system for First Nations children. As a fluent *Anishinaabe* speaker it is imperative that my children, grandchildren, and future generations be given opportunities for Indigenous language revitalization.

**Language Loss.** The state of Indigenous languages is at different stages of loss. Leanne Hinton (2013), categorized them as endangered at different levels of severity depending on the community:

1. Languages still spoken by all groups, but with a visible decline in the proportion of children learning it at the home, and a decline in the domains in which the language is used for communication.
2. Languages that children are no longer learning at home at all. This could mean that the parent generation knows the language but has ceased using it, or perhaps the grandparent generation is the last generation that knows it. Depending on the

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characteristics of language loss in a given community, there may be a generation of semi-speakers.

3. Languages that no one speaks except a few aged individuals.
4. Languages that have lost all their speakers, so that the only record of them (if any) lies in the notes and recordings by linguists. These are beyond being “endangered” and are usually called “dead Languages.” (p.33)

In 1984, the Department of the Secretary of State, under the federal government, commissioned a major review on the state of Aboriginal languages in Canada. It found that of the 53 distinct Aboriginal languages only three were predicted to survive (Kirkness, 2013, p.143). In 2017, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) held a series of engagement sessions across Canada in preparation for the co-development of legislation for an Indigenous Languages Act. The Assembly of First Nations found that every Indigenous language in Canada was in a critical state in terms of the percentage of the population who could speak their language (Assembly of First Nations, 2017). There are studies after studies as Kirkness (2013) writes, “It has not happened; instead over the years, the federal government has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars engaging numerous task forces and other studies to determine the state of Aboriginal languages ad nauseam, with little or no money reaching the communities where it is needed” (p. 145). It is inevitable that language loss will continue to happen as every year there are fewer and fewer speakers as elders pass away.

The challenges in achieving Indigenous oral fluency include the passing on of language speakers and the fact that Indigenous peoples practice an oral language (Kirkness, 2013). This has resulted in a lack of written documentation and writing systems of the various dialects of the

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Indigenous languages (Battiste, 2013). Arthurson (2012) writes of three options for retention and revitalizing the First Nations languages in schools by 1. First Nations immersion programs, 2. First Nations bilingual programs where education is provided half of the time in English and half of the time in the local Indigenous language and, 3. teaching Indigenous language as a course or subject. All Manitoba First Nations would benefit if given the right resources and sufficient funding to run immersion and/or bilingual programs. Many First Nation schools offer the community's First Nation language as a subject, however there is a lack of reporting on the impact of language retention (Arthurson, 2012).

**Impacts of Language Loss.** As an *Anishinaabekwe*, with the gift of speaking fluently in my language, I have many fond memories of my childhood. As a child from birth, I was immersed in the language. My First Nations language has embedded a knowledge system that has helped me to know who I am and is linked to my identity as a proud *Anishinaabekwe*. This is recognized by Kirkness (1998) who stated, "Those who support the retention of Aboriginal languages do so because they realize the importance language has to one's identity" (p.4). The Chiefs of Manitoba in 1971, also gave a message about identity, "We achieve our place by combining basic and relevant aspects of our traditional way of life, with those aspects of a different culture in a way that permits us to establish a meaningful Indian identity in a changing world" (Indian Tribes of Manitoba, 1971, p.107). However, we are now in the twenty first century and First Nations are still fighting to have recognition of First Nations languages.

Language loss greatly impacts the knowledge and well-being of First Nations people and must be addressed. The lack of access to learning ancestral language can have a significant effect of knowing who you are and where you come from (Okemaw, 2019). As an *Anishinaabe* speaker I remember so vividly things like walking on the grass during an early summer morning, saying

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in my mind *agooziibiia*, a full description of the entire visual image of a blade of grass with a water drop on it. Knowledge of my ancestral language allows me to fully connect with everything that is around me in a deeper way than the English language can provide. The First Nations language is what makes us distinct, it is how life is understood:

*Kiigidowin gii miinigook ni-niigiigook shigo nookoouk taago nimishoomisuk.*

(My language was spoken and taught to me by my parents including my grandmothers and grandfathers.)

*Niibawa Anishinaabe tibachimowin aatamagut kiigidoowining aniin ashi pimatis(z)it Anishinaabe.*

(There are many narrative teachings in my language of how *Anishinaabe* people came to be and how they fulfill their journey of life.)

*Mushkwayiziin omiinigon jii soongigabowit Anishinaabe jii kikandung okiigidoowin.*

(It gives strength to stand strong with stability to the *Anishinaabe* to speak their language.)

*Kine atago kiigidoowin kit(d)ishi kikandaziimin aniishina mii ima pimatiziwin kikangigun wendosamaguk.*

(We do not only know it as a language because this is also where the knowledge of life comes from.) (Adeline Mercredi, *Anishinaabe* Teachings)

Knowing the First Nations language helps me to fully understand and know *mino pimatis(z)iiwin*, living with values based on who I am as an *Anishinaabekwe*. However, my gift of natural language acquisition, which includes the cultural aspects, has already been lost for the past two generations in my family, and perhaps longer for others. The fluency that had been provided by my parents and grandparents of the *Anishinaabe* language stopped with my

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generation. My children had an opportunity to learn three languages, Cree, Ojibway, and English but because my husband and I were trapped in the colonized mindset we did not pass on the fluency of the First Nations languages to our children.

**Colonization.** The loss of languages amongst First Nations people is one of the greatest negative impacts of colonization in Canada. The residential school system, one of the most prominent factors to language loss, began in the 1840's with the last residential school to close in 1996 (Arthurson, 2014, p.2). Battiste (2013) further stated:

Residential schooling was intended to root out and destroy Indigenous knowledge, languages, and relationships with the natural family to replace them with Eurocentric values, identities, and beliefs that ultimately were aimed at destroying children's self esteem, self concept, and healthy relationships with each other and their families. (p.56)

It is important to acknowledge the truths of what happened to First Nations people in these schools and the intergenerational impacts that it has caused through the years to the present.

In 1971, the document, *Wahbung-Our Tomorrows*, identified that "Education has failed to recognize our cultural values and customs, our language, and our contributions to mankind. It has led to failure and the lowering of self-esteem" (p.109). This was a call to the federal government on the need for change 50 years ago. In a study specific to language, Dr. Onowa McIvor (2018) writes, "in recent decades revitalization of Indigenous languages has been identified as a human right with a call to Government to rectify the colonial harms caused to Indigenous languages" (p.1). On a national scale, due to colonization of Indigenous peoples, recognition and acknowledgment of the importance of the First Nations' languages and culture continues to be a contentious issue (Assembly of First Nations, 2017).

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In 2008, the federal government made an official apology for all the wrongs inflicted upon Indigenous children, included in the statements was that the residential school system was to “kill the Indian in the child” (Gillies & Battiste, 2013, p.109). However, even though there was an apology, the government, at the time led by Prime Minister Harper, refused to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

It was not until May 2016, with a newly elected federal government of Canada, that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was officially adopted. UNDRIP, an international document addresses Indigenous languages, specifically, Article 14-1 which states, “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning” (UNDRIP, 2008, p.7). The UNDRIP provided First Nations people hope of further reconciliation of past wrongs (Fontaine, 2016).

As a further measure of reconciliation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), called on the federal government to address ninety four calls to action. This included a call to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act (p.2). The Assembly of First Nations (2017) also advocated for “legislation to establish long-term, sustainable, consistent, appropriate approaches to support First Nations in their efforts to recover, reclaim, revitalize, maintain and normalize First Nations Languages” (p.1). In response, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the development of an Indigenous Languages Act in December 2016.

Post-colonial practices, as suggested by Brayboy (2005) and Kirkness (2013), such as language revitalization and the spirit of reconciliation to address previous oppressive practices provide an enhanced understanding of how the inter-connectedness of language, culture and

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identity contribute to the well-being of First Nations people. Language revitalization is complex, therefore, proper consultation and collaboration between First Nations and governments is critical in providing proper resourcing for Indigenous languages.

**Literature review relevance.** The literature from the various sources reveal an interconnection outlined on the impacts of First Nations language loss and the need to recognize the importance of revitalizing and preserving First Nations languages. The literature on Indigenous language loss and revitalization originates from a number of sources including: 1. Documents and Reports, 2. First Nations Chief's Resolutions, 3. Language Acts, 4. International Documents, 5. Published Books and Articles.

**Documents and reports.** The documents and reports on First Nations language loss and revitalization provide steps forward. These reports also state that Indigenous languages are endangered. The document *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (1971) is a very seminal document for all First Nations in Manitoba. It is a historic First Nations public document written by the Indian Tribes of Manitoba in 1971 as a response to Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's "White Paper" (Kirkness, 2013, p.69). *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (1971) represents the united stance of the Chiefs of Manitoba in addressing the continued oppression by the Canadian Government towards First Nations. According to the Chiefs of Manitoba, "Customs on which whole societies and systems of authority had been built were almost obliterated by non-Indian legislators. Religious beliefs, medicine men, sun-dancing, even our language was written off as irrelevant for the new "civilization" in our own land" (Indian tribes of Manitoba, 1971, p.103). It has since been a source of historical reference to empower First Nations people.

In 1972, *Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE)* a document written by the National Indian Brotherhood (now Assembly of First Nations) stated:

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We want education to provide the setting in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honored place in Indian tradition and culture. The values that we want to pass on to our children, values which make our people a great race, are not written in any book. They are found in our history, our legends and in the culture. We believe that if an Indian child is fully aware of the important Indian values he will have reason to be proud of our race and of himself as an Indian. (Assembly of First Nations, 2010, p.28)

The ICIE was revised in 2010 as many of the underlying principles of the document have never been fully supported by any of the successive federal governments.

In 1996, a five-volume report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was submitted to the Government of Canada (Government of Canada 2016). The introduction of the report notes the importance of providing five complete volumes as a means of giving justice to the findings and importance of recommendations for change to address historic wrongs towards Indigenous people. As part of volume three, *Gathering Strength*, the Commissioners stated:

We also consider the policy implications of a commitment to acknowledging and affirming the importance of Aboriginal languages and cultures in Canadian society. We emphasize that adoption of far-sighted, culturally appropriate policies and initiatives, under the authority of Aboriginal people themselves, cannot and should not await new regimes of self-government. (p.14)

In 2005, an appointed group of ten members, named the Task Force on Languages and Cultures, provided a report to the Minister of Canadian Heritage titled, *Towards a New Beginning: A Foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis*



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*Cultures* (Government of Canada, 2013). The report was conducted based on an announcement that “Canada would create a centre...to help preserve, revitalize and promote Aboriginal languages and cultures” (p. i). This report consisted of twenty-five recommendations in the areas of Language Education, Language Funding and Community Development Approaches to Language Revitalization for First Nations, Inuit and Metis people of Canada.

In 2013, the First Peoples’ Cultural Council Language Programs of British Columbia published the document, *A Guide to Language Policy and Planning for B.C. First Nations Communities* (First Peoples’ Cultural Council, 2013). The guide was, “intended to support First Nations communities, governments, schools and language authorities across British Columbia in the implementation of language policies and programs that lead to effective and successful long-term language revitalization” (p.11). As a follow-up to this guide a report was produced in 2014 titled, *The Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages 2014, Second Edition* (First Peoples’ Cultural Council, 2014). The purpose of the report was to communicate the status of First Nations languages in B.C., and to help First Nations with language maintenance and revitalization planning initiatives.

The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015) led by Judge Murray Sinclair, is a report written following a five-year consultation with residential school survivors throughout Canada. The report contains key findings including 94 recommendations for structural and systemic change because of the damages of colonial practice in Canada. The key recommendations related to Indigenous language preservation and revitalization include the following:

We call upon the federal government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights.

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We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principles: i. Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them. ii. Aboriginal language rights are reinforced by the Treaties. iii. The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation. iv. The preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities. v. Funding for Aboriginal language initiatives must reflect the diversity of Aboriginal languages.

We call upon the federal government to appoint, in consultation with Aboriginal groups, an Aboriginal Languages Commissioner. The commissioner should help promote Aboriginal languages and report on the adequacy of federal funding of Aboriginal-language initiatives.

We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.

We call upon all levels of government to enable residential school Survivors and their families to reclaim names changed by the residential school system by waiving administrative costs for a period of five years for the name-change process and the revision of official identity documents, such as birth certificates, passports, driver's licenses, health cards, status cards, and social insurance numbers. (p. 6)

In 2016, the First Peoples' Cultural Council of British Columbia published *Indigenous Languages Recognition, Preservation and Revitalization; A Report on the National Dialogue Session on Indigenous Languages*. The report summarized the dialogue of First Nations around

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four themes concerning Indigenous language including: 1. language rights, legislation and policy, 2. community-based revitalization, 3. education, and 4. urban strategies (p. 3). All of these documents and reports have provided strong points and suggestions on First Nations language preservation and revitalization but continue to be unaddressed leaving the state of Indigenous languages endangered.

**First Nations Chiefs' resolutions.** Another source of important literature is contained within the recently published letters and resolutions from First Nations leadership. Key publications include: 1. Assembly of First Nations Resolution on Revitalization of Indigenous Languages, Resolution no. 06/2015 - *Revitalization of Indigenous Languages: Concrete Actions to Support Indigenous Language Teachers and Cultural Centres*, 2. Assembly of First Nations Resolution endorsing the TRC Calls to Action, Resolution no. 01/2015 - *Support for the Full Implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action*, 3. Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs Letter to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau and Ministers, RE: UBCIC Resolution 2017-05 - *Supporting Revitalization of Indigenous Languages*, 4. First Nations Summit Letters to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, the Honourable Christy Clark and Ministers, Re: *Supporting Revitalization of Indigenous Languages in BC*. These resolutions and letters are once again a united stance made by First Nations leadership to the Government of Canada requesting recognition, support, and revitalization of Indigenous languages.

**Language Acts.** Canada's official language act came into effect September 1969 (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2021). This act recognizes and gives equal rights to both French and English as Canada's official languages. This legislation, amongst other colonial forces, set the stage for Canada's official platform of bilingualism. If Indigenous languages had

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been included in some form and given official recognition would the state of Indigenous languages be in a different position today? Would schools have been funded to allow children to take their primary schooling in their first language? Would resources have been in place so Indigenous people would be able to keep their language base? The state of Indigenous languages are now categorized as endangered across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016).

In Manitoba, the Aboriginal Languages Recognition Act was passed for the seven languages of Cree, Dakota, Dene, Inuktitut, Michif, Ojibway and Oji-Cree (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2010).). The act recognized the Aboriginal languages spoken and used in Manitoba but did not assign them official status. Although it was big first step, it did not go far enough. It failed to put supports and resources in place to facilitate development of a framework, programs, training and materials to create a successful language program.

On December 6, 2016 the newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the federal government's commitment to the Indigenous Language Act to be co-developed with Indigenous people of Canada. In preparation for the co-development of legislation for an Indigenous Languages Act, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) held a series of engagement sessions across the country from June to October, 2017 with more than 500 Regional Chiefs, Chiefs, Councillors, Elders, fluent speakers, knowledge keepers, language champions and activists, Indigenous scholars and linguists attending. The Assembly of First Nations undertook the AFN Indigenous Languages Initiative Engagement Sessions in keeping with the Assembly of First Nations Executive Motion, supported by the AFN Chiefs Committee on Languages and resolutions 06-2015 and 01-2015 (Assembly of First Nations, 2017).

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The Assembly of First Nations (2017) suggested that legislation must support people of all ages in the ability to use their language in all domains; this must be accessible to all

Indigenous people. There are four essential points of inclusion:

1. **Recognition.** The Indigenous languages of this land have existed since time immemorial and pre-exist Canada; they must be recognized, protected, respected, valued, promoted, acknowledged, supported and used.
2. **Indigenous Rights and Control.** It is the constitutional and inherent right of each Indigenous government to direct, maintain and develop their own language and culture (Indigenous control of Indigenous languages).
3. **Access.** All Indigenous languages need to be accessible to all Indigenous people regardless of where they reside.
4. **Establishment of a Language Structure(s).** Legislation must mandate the establishment of a language body or bodies that orchestrate the following four critical roles: government accountability, funding, support for language learning, and public promotion and awareness. (p.3)

**International documents.** International documents set the stage for the legal, rights-based arguments, and inform the entire world about the state of Indigenous languages, knowledge systems and cultures. Rooted in a postcolonial framework these documents contextualize that Indigenous people are an important part of humanity whose rights and ways of knowing have been affected by the genocidal intentions of the colonial process. In September of 2007, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, 2008). Although United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is not a legally binding mechanism, it does provide

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movement towards principles of non-discrimination and respect for all cultures and languages.

The *United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Study on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, 2012) suggested,

...international and regional standards on Indigenous peoples' rights to language and culture, describes the relationship between Indigenous cultures and languages to their self-determination and rights to their lands, territories and resources, analyses Indigenous peoples' languages and identities and cultures and identities, including challenges faced in the promotion and protection of Indigenous language and cultural rights. (p. 1)

In the *United Nations Report of the international expert group meeting on Indigenous languages* (2008) discussions included "the importance of linguistic diversity, the connection between language rights and all other fundamental rights, a concern for the lack of urgency while the majority of all Indigenous languages are threatened with extinction, and proposals for the revitalization, promotion and protection of Indigenous languages" (p. 1). These referenced international documents recognize Indigenous languages as a human rights agenda that is rooted in a post-colonial framework.

**Published books and articles.** Since the historic *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* there have been more books, articles, theses and dissertations written by Indigenous scholars and authors which emphasize the importance of Indigenous language and the importance it carries in the culture and ways of knowing. In this thesis I intentionally summarize materials written by Indigenous authors and scholars. Verna Kirkness is a Cree scholar, author and researcher who helped in writing *Wahbung - Our Tomorrows*. In her book *Creating Spaces* (2013) she recalls how she worked with the chiefs, "Once I received the initial direction from the chiefs, I had to

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write up what they had proposed...At subsequent meetings with the chiefs, I reviewed what I had written and we proceeded from there” (p. 69). Her involvement with Indigenous movements within Manitoba and across Canada provides her with many insights on the importance, and recognition of Indigenous education and language development. Kirkness also published *Aboriginal Languages: A Collection of Talks and Papers* (1998) as well as articles such as *The Critical State of Aboriginal Languages in Canada: A Proactive Response* (1996).

Another Indigenous scholar and author from the Mik'ma First Nations, is Marie Battiste, who is involved with the Indigenous language rights movements. In 2000 she published, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* and in 2002 published *Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education*. Her recent book, *Decolonizing Education Nourishing the Learning Spirit* was published in 2013.

Basil Johnston suggested, “Without a knowledge of the language scholars can never take for granted the accuracy of an interpretation or translation of a passage, let alone a single word; nor can they presume that their articles, tracts, treatises, essays bear the kind of accuracy that scholarship and integrity demand” (2005, p. 94). In his work as an *Anishinaabe* author and scholar, Johnston (2005) was able to signify the importance and the true sacredness of the Indigenous language. There are a growing number of Indigenous scholars such as Absolon, Brayboy, Kawagley, Barnhardt, Wilson, Murdock, Gehl, Scott, Okemaw, Tuhiwai-Smith, amongst others who have contributed greatly in understanding the ways of Indigenous culture and language who I will reference as I continue this study.

A review of the referenced literature on the subject of First Nations language loss and revitalization within Manitoba and throughout Canada reveal a number of common themes. Firstly, the history of colonization of Indigenous people has resulted in a dramatic and critical

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loss of language fluency and a critical loss of Indigenous language speakers. Secondly, all of the literature on this subject points to the monumental failure of the Government of Canada to provide the adequate resource to address this problem in any meaningful way. The third theme within the literature suggests that increasing language fluency takes a comprehensive community development approach.

Further reflection on the literature presented suggests a number of gaps in the current literature on this subject. Firstly, it appears that little research has been based on the perspectives and practices of First Nation language fluent speakers who are certified teachers and have taught in First Nation schools. This research will attempt to fill that gap. The second apparent gap in literature is a lack of a comprehensive grassroots strategy with the cost of implementing that strategic plan specific to the needs of First Nations schools in Manitoba. Along with the perspectives of language revitalization the individuals in this study will have the opportunity to contribute to this long-term strategic plan for their school.

**Conclusion.** In this chapter I have positioned myself as a fluent *Anishinaabekwe* (Ojibway woman) language speaker and educator in relation to the subject of Indigenous language loss and revitalization. These personal perspectives shared not only relate to me as an individual but to intergenerational language loss within my immediate and extended family and my community and other Indigenous Nations throughout Manitoba. This chapter also provides a review of the relevant literature from multiple sources including Chiefs Resolutions, government publications, First Nations organizations, books, articles, theses and dissertations on this subject. An analysis on the literature reveals common themes such as the effects of colonization on intergenerational transmission of language and culture and lack of resources provided to First Nations to repair this damage.



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It is very timely to engage in research focusing on Indigenous language revitalization. The late respected First Nation Elder-educator and fluent Inninew-Cree speaker Dr. Don Robertson suggested that, “developing a multi-year strategic plan is an effective mechanism to address complex, multi-layered reconciliation issues such as the loss of First Nation language in Manitoba (Personal Communication, May 22, 2018, Dr. Don Robertson). The purpose of this thesis research will be to examine the perspectives of a select sample of bilingual First Nation educators who work within the First Nations school system in Manitoba. They will share their experiences, knowledge and cultural beliefs on First Nation language programming, preservation and revitalization. Out of this compilation of ideas may come wisdom to guide the development of an effective revitalization and preservation strategy. The following chapter will outline the methods I will employ to enrich the current literature on this subject.

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**Chapter 3****Methodology**

**Data collection.** For this research, I gathered data through semi-structured interviews from three First Nations educators teaching in a First Nations school in Manitoba. There are a number of *Anishinaabemowin* (Ojibway) community schools throughout Manitoba. Ojibway are the largest Indigenous linguistic group in Manitoba. I began by approaching one *Anishinaabe* community in Manitoba. I asked the Chief and Council of the First Nations community for their permission to have their school involved in the study. The Director of Education and the principal were also asked to grant permission to work in the school. If permission was not granted I would select another school. Once permission was granted by community and school leadership, I then sent a letter of intent to all teachers within the school inviting those interested to contact me directly, as the researcher. Three teachers were then selected to participate in this study based on the following criteria: 1. their voluntary expression to participate in this study, 2. their ability to fluently speak their First Nations language, and 3. have a minimum of five years teaching experience in a First Nations school, particularly in the area of teaching a First Nations language. If at least three teachers from the consenting school did not meet the selection criteria, I would then approach another school to continue my recruitment process.

Open ended semi structured interviews then took place with the three participants selected to take part in this research. I anticipated in engaging with each participant two to three times with research questions sent to them ahead of time. The interviews were audiotaped along with notes being taken by the observer. Transcripts of the tapes were written out for later examination.

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Interview schedules were dependent on the availability of participants. As a researcher, I ensured that the research did not interfere with school functioning. I met with the participants where they felt most comfortable to meet. Little did I know at the time, how the COVID 19 Pandemic would interfere with my research timeframe.

**Participants.** For the participants who met the selection criteria, contact was made by travelling to the community and visiting them in person to explain the nature of the research and to determine if they were interested in participating in the research. If they agreed, I explained the process and left them with the consent form, the interview questions, and a summary of the research study. When I had three volunteered participants with all of the requirements as proposed in my ENREB, I notified all other teachers who expressed an interest advising them that I had my three participants. I scheduled an interview as soon as they were available. I reviewed the interview process with all letters, signing of consent form, taking notes, and electronically recording them with their permission. Though it was voluntary for the participants, in following cultural protocol, I offered tobacco for their permission to help me with my research by sharing their stories and at the end providing them a small gift as an offering for their knowledge. As an educator and Indigenous person working with the majority of the First Nations in Manitoba, I was known to the participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants, school and community.

**Interviewer.** As an Indigenist researcher, it is important for me to distinguish between the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ researcher in relation to research with Indigenous people. According to Tuhiwai- Smith (2012), a Maori researcher, “an insider is an Indigenous researcher working within Indigenous communities” (p. 205). There are advantages and disadvantages that insiders and outsiders face when conducting research within Indigenous communities. As an insider, I

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have connection within, previous relationships with, firsthand knowledge of the way things are done in community. This position helps me to gain access and to have the trust with people in First Nations communities. As an insider researcher, and in particular an *Anishinaabekwe* who speaks my *Anishinaabe* language, I have a lived experience and an in-depth knowledge of *Anishinaabe* and English language structures. This will help me interpret what my participants are saying. However, I also have to be careful that my own personal beliefs and perspectives do not bias how I interpret the data. I am an educator of thirty plus years who can relate to other educators and understand how children acquire language and literacy skills. A potential disadvantage of being an insider researcher is that participants may have predetermined assumptions and expectations of me.

**Materials and equipment.** For this study, I used an audiotape cassette recorder and an electronic digital tape recorder to make sure I captured the full conversations of the participants for proper documentation. A copy of the questions was provided to the participants when consents were signed with another copy provided at the time of the interview.

**Data analysis.** The audiotapes were transcribed into a written format and shared with the participants for their review with the opportunity to make any changes until their final approval. As researcher, I analyzed the transcriptions to arrange order and sequence. I conducted a qualitative coding process, described by Creswell (2008) to make “sense out of text data, divide it into text or image segments, label the segments with codes, examine codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into broad themes” (p. 251). Qualitative research is an ongoing process of evaluating and re-evaluating, analysis is a cyclical process of going back and forth between data collection and analysis until you reach the intended purpose (Creswell, 2008).

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A component added to this analysis was my own self-reflection of my biases, values, and assumptions I had while actively writing my research study. This involved my own personal experiences in collaboration with the participants in the phases of this study. As a fluent *Anishinaabe* speaker, I identified how my interpretation of the data and my conclusions formulated in this study.

**Validation.** Creswell (2008) defines validation in qualitative research as “the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking and triangulation” (p.266). I chose not to use triangulation because according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), “It confuses more than it clarifies, intimidates more than enlightens. If you use different data-collecting techniques---interviewing, observation and official documents for example---say that” (p116). The primary validation strategies I used were member checking and Indigenous validation strategies. Following the transcription of the interviews I went back to the community to review the transcripts of the interviews with the participants. I encouraged them to add, change, or delete information if they chose to from the original interview. This was also an opportunity for the participants to check for accuracy of proper spelling, transcription interpretation, especially the *Anishinaabe* language.

Another strategy I used was peer review, I selected a First Nations scholar to critically review my work to point out any biases I may not have been aware of in the analysis of the data. The scholar was very helpful in making me understand possible biases and cautioned me that I was the writer for the voice of the participants.

The two First Nations validation strategies I used include using cultural protocols and practicing relational accountability. As an *Anishinaabekwe*, I am mindful that I am not above any other person and follow the ways of the seven teachings. Wilson (2008), writes of relational

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accountability in his context of an Indigenous paradigm, “In essence this means that the methodology needs to be based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)” (p. 99). As an *Anishinaabekwe* and researcher, these First Nations validation strategies are important to recognize in researching Indigenous people.

**Education/Nursing research ethics board, tri-council, and ownership, control, access and possession.** I applied to the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) for approval of my research study. The purpose of the application to ENREB was to ensure informed consent of participants, to identify the research instruments, my recruitment strategy, to ensure no deception with my participants, to inform participants of feedback and debriefing, to explain the risks and benefits of participating in this research, and assurance of anonymity and confidentiality of research participants. The ENREB application also included a detailed description of how I will disseminate the findings.

I have complied with the requirements of the Tri-Council policy statement (TCPS) and Ownership Control Access Privacy (OCAP) standards in working with First Nations in the research process. Principles I adhered to include developing and maintaining respectful reciprocal relationships, honoring cultural knowledge, adhering to the morays of the community, ensuring that the research will have some benefit to the community.

**Conclusion.** The purpose of this study is to look at factors related to loss and revitalization of First Nations languages by interviewing participants who are First Nations language speakers. By listening to their stories and examining the information that they share it is my belief that revitalization and retention strategies for the First Nations language will begin to emerge. It is important to validate the information from the participants’ stories to gain a full

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understanding of how language, culture, and their knowledge systems have served their purpose of being in this world as human beings, *wenji-pimatis(z)iiwat* (why they are a living people).

Ultimately, I hope to create a new positive message to enlighten and inspire the present and future generations of the value within our First Nations languages. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated, “It [research] allows people to understand themselves better, increases their awareness of problems, and raises commitment. To know the facts firsthand is to have one’s consciousness raised and dedication increased about particular issues” (p.240). Through this research it is hoped that there will be reinforcement of the importance of Indigenous languages, a resurgence of the value of the *Anishinaabe* language by Indigenous peoples, and awareness for the urgency for people to take action.

**Limitations.** As part of the qualitative research design, I chose to limit the number of participants to three for this research study. Therefore, due to the small sample size and focus on one First Nations’ language there may be some limitations related to the generalizability of all of my findings. However, similarities do exist amongst all First Nations in regards to language loss and revitalization. Therefore, the experiences of the participants in this study may relate to other First Nations in Manitoba and possibly to other Indigenous groups outside of Manitoba.

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**Chapter 4****Data Analysis and Interpretation**

**Indigenous and western methodologies.** As an Indigenist researcher, I have used Indigenous methodologies (Gehl, 2017; Battiste, 2013; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Absolon, 2011; Wilson, 2008) (see Figure 5) as well as Creswell's (2008) western methodologies of qualitative and narrative research processes (see Table 1). I strongly believe that as an *Anishinaabekwe*, I follow the ways of Indigenous methodologies but I also recognize that it can be compatible with western methodologies as Absolon (2011) stated:

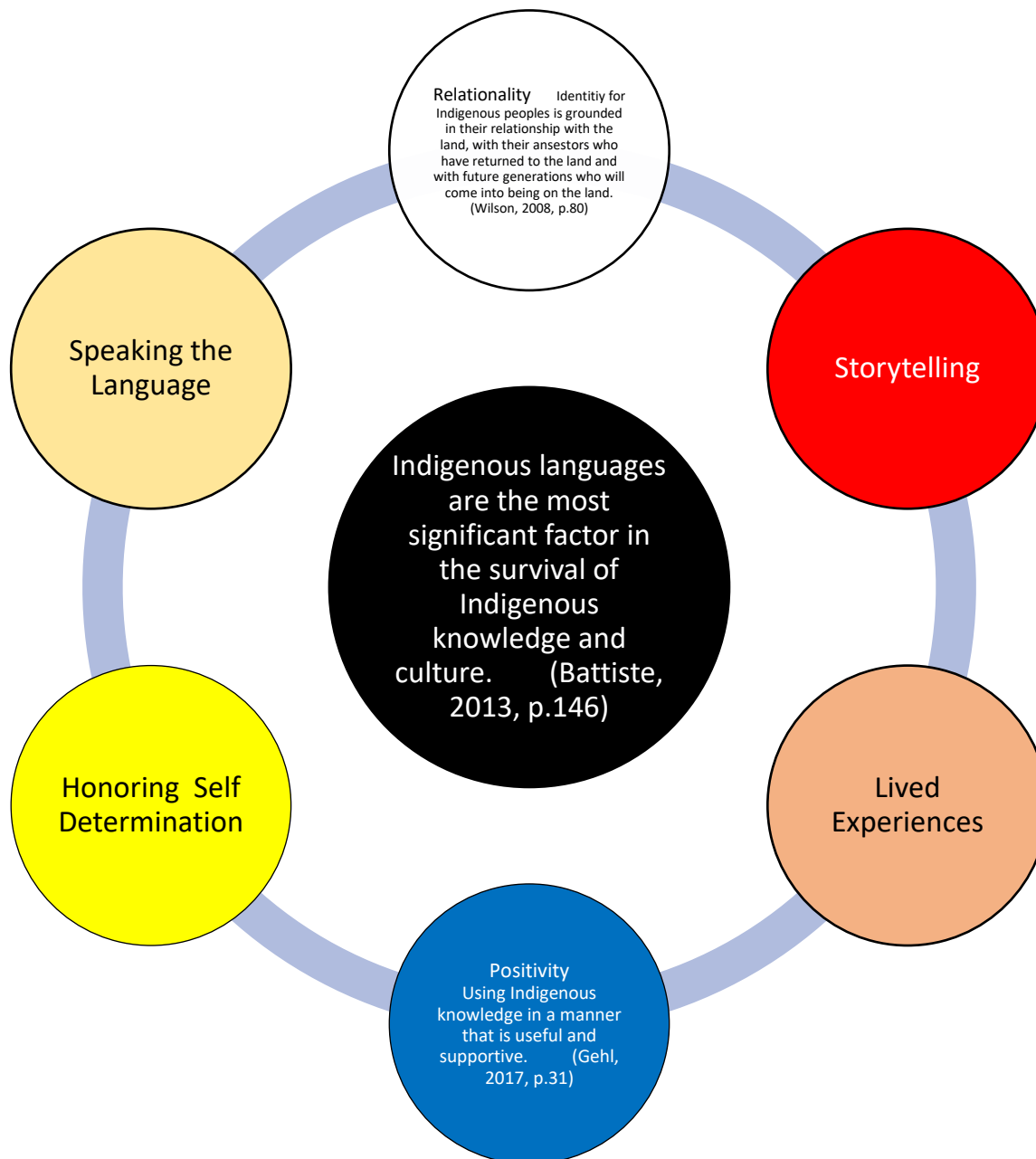
I see an important distinction here between having an Indigenous perspective within a western research paradigm and doing re-search methodologies within an Indigenous worldview/paradigm. Nevertheless, some qualitative research methodologies are compatible with Indigenous paradigms. (p. 30)

While interviewing, I have listened to the stories of the lived experiences of the participants and their shared knowledge as *Anishinaabe* people and fluent speakers of the language. Use of Indigenous and western methodologies are used interchangeably throughout this research study. As part of the Indigenous research process the participants were offered a small pouch of tobacco when asked to participate. Acceptance of the tobacco ensured an agreement to share their knowledge. As per the western methodology, the participants were provided with a letter outlining the purpose of the research with a consent form to be signed agreeing to be a participant. Once the interviews were complete and the participants were satisfied with the transcriptions, a small gift was given which follows Indigenous protocols for sharing their knowledge.



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**Figure 5 Indigenous Methodologies**



Indigenous methodology incorporates Indigenous knowledge, relationality, storytelling, lived experiences, positivity, honoring self-determination, speaking the language in a wholistic nature that is not linear. (Gehl, 2017; Battiste, 2013 Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Absolon, 2011; Wilson, 2008)

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**Table 1 Qualitative and Narrative Research Process**

<b>The Research Process</b>	<b>Qualitative Characteristics</b>	<b>Narrative Research Characteristics</b>
Identify a research problem	A qualitative problem requires exploration and understanding	Seeks to understand and represent experiences through the stories individual(s) live and tell
Review the literature	The qualitative literature plays a minor role The qualitative literature justifies the research problem	Seeks to minimize the use of literature and focus on the experiences of the individual(s)
Develop a purpose statement and research questions	The qualitative purpose statement and research questions are broad and general The qualitative purpose statement and research questions seek participants' experience	Seeks to explore the meaning of the individual's experience as told through a story or stories.
Collect qualitative data	Qualitative data collection is based on using protocols developed during the study Qualitative data collection involves gathering text or image data Qualitative data collection involves studying a small number of individuals or sites	Seeks to collect field texts that document the individual's story in his or her own words
Analyze and interpret qualitative data	Qualitative data analysis consists of text analysis, describing information, and of developing themes Qualitative interpretations situate findings within larger meanings	Seeks to analyze the stories by retelling the individual's story Seeks to analyze the stories by identifying themes or categories of information Seeks to situate the story within its place or setting Seeks to analyze the story for chronological information about the individual's past, present, and future
Write and evaluate a study	Qualitative research reports use flexible and emerging structures and evaluation criteria Qualitative researchers take a reflexive and biased approach	Seeks to collaborate with the participant when writing the research study Seeks to write the study in a flexible storytelling mode Seeks to evaluate the study based on the depth, accuracy, persuasiveness, and realism of the account

Adapted from Creswell (2008), p.514

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**Participant interviews.** Three participants who work in an *Anishinaabe* First Nations school in Manitoba were asked to participate in this research study. I used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2008) as a selection process which allowed me to choose my participants. The main reason this method was used was to fulfill specific requirements, one of the more important was the ability to speak fluently in *Anishinaabemowin*. Each of the participants were provided a pseudonym and any identifying information was either changed or omitted from their interviews to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. In the fall of 2020, I was fortunate enough to be able to travel to the First Nations community after gaining permission from the Chief to do so, amidst the COVID 19 Pandemic. It was important to meet the First Nations Chief and Council, Education Director, Principal, and possible participants on a personal level. It provided me face to face contact to build relationality, a term used by Wilson (2008) as an opportunity to build relationships and share connections which is very important. After completing all of the required permissions and documentation for Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB), I began my interview process with the participants.

The First Nations school remained open in the fall of 2020 with COVID guidelines in place. However, the participants were given an option of where they would feel most comfortable in providing an interview. Liza (a pseudonym) chose to do the interview in her home, a very relaxing and quiet atmosphere with no one else in the house, her calm inviting nature made me feel comfortable. We shared some conversation before we began the interview giving me an opportunity to set up my recorders. I began by explaining the purpose of the research using both the *Anishinaabe* language and English. She had some written notes that she had prepared from the interview questions that had been provided to her beforehand. She referred to her notes from time to time to remind her of important points she wanted to share.

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She spoke mostly in the *Anishinaabe* language and was comfortable in sharing her thoughts and telling her stories as we went through the interview. We engaged in both laughter and seriousness as she shared her stories.

When the interview ended, I thanked her for sharing her knowledge and let her know that I would provide her with the transcribed interview as soon as it was completed. However, due to the second wave of the COVID 19 Pandemic the restrictions of later fall 2020 did not allow for any contact until after the spring break, March 2021, when the school was finally open. Only until then, was I able to make contact and provide Liza with the finalized transcript of her interview. She went through the transcript and shared some remarks and one edit. As she walked me to her door I thanked her once again and she remarked, “*kitchi meegwetch kee bi gagwajeemee-un chi wee-gee nahn*” (a gratitude, a big thank you for coming to ask me to help you).

My second participant, Agnes (a pseudonym) also chose to do her interview in her home. It was a nice fall day with only her husband and herself at home. We sat in her kitchen and as I set up my recorders we enjoyed some conversation about the nice weather. We then began the interview with my explanation of the purpose of my research. When we began with my first question, she started by sharing some of her experiences in the residential school regarding the *Anishinaabe* language. As I listened to her story, I felt anger and frustration towards the residential school. I was certain that these memories were not easy for her. Her tone was serious in nature as she shared her stories, experiences, and knowledge. She spoke in both the *Anishinaabe* language and English as we went through the interview. After the interview we sat and talked as I wanted to make sure she was not left with feelings of anxiety after sharing some of her residential school experiences. Through conversation, she shared that she was at a point in

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her life where she had come to terms with the past. I thanked her for her time and let her know that I would provide her with the transcribed interview as soon as it was completed. As in Liza's case, the COVID 19 Pandemic restrictions and school closure did not allow me to contact Agnes. I was finally able to meet with her after spring break (April 2021) to give her the transcribed interview. She met with me a week later to tell me she was satisfied with her interview and had nothing further to add.

My third participant, Rochelle's (a pseudonym) interview took more time to set up and complete. I had met with her in person to gain her permission as a participant and had given her all the information with the questions for the interview in the fall (late October 2020) when I began the interview process for my research. Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic restrictions, we were not able to meet for an interview. Rochelle had sent me answers to the research questions by email, however when I responded to her email I received no reply. It was because at that time (October 2020), the school had already shut down. We did have some minimal conversation on the phone after spring break (2021). I then had an opportunity to meet with her briefly when the school re-opened after spring break to further explain the need for an interview process. However, the continuation of strict COVID 19 Pandemic restrictions and health and safety concerns did not allow us to meet which left us no choice but to do a telephone interview versus an in-person interview.

It was an early morning telephone interview, I had set up my recorders ahead of time with my research questions at hand. I could sense she was a bit apprehensive and self-conscious as we started our conversation. I tried to put her at ease by asking her about her family. I asked about her granddaughter who was visiting and this enabled a more comfortable conversation. I expressed my appreciation for the written responses she had sent to me but further clarified the

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importance of the telephone interview. I explained that sharing her stories, experiences, and knowledge was very important for me through an oral conversation. I began the interview by sharing the purpose of my research using the *Anishinaabe* language and English. She shared some of her written responses and became more and more comfortable in sharing her thoughts and stories as we continued with the interview. She spoke mostly English when we started but as she became comfortable she conversed in the *Anishinaabe* language when I asked her questions or made comments using the *Anishinaabe* language as well. At the end of the interview, she was somewhat surprised that we were finished. It seemed that she was enjoying sharing in conversation. I let her know that I would have her interview transcribed as soon as possible. I was able to provide it to her a week after the telephone interview. She had no changes and was satisfied with her interview.

**COVID 19 Pandemic interruption.** Since the onset of the COVID 19 Pandemic, March 2020 for Canada, and into the present, May 2021, there have been continual restrictions that have hindered the process of my research study. The restrictions and lockdown to the First Nations schools and communities particularly delayed the participant interview process. Health and safety continued to take precedence with very limited to no access to the First Nations communities. Most First Nations communities were in lockdown. This included limitations of reaching participants virtually, due to poor internet connectivity in First Nations communities. There are only certain entities such as the Band Office, Health Centre, and the School that have internet connection in First Nations communities, therefore internet access is extremely limited. Bandwidth is minimal for the majority of First Nations communities. I was also under strictly enforced COVID restrictions making it difficult for any communication. Telephone correspondence was not an option due to many limitations such as privacy, lack of time, space,

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and social emotional stresses of being confined to home. At this present time of spring 2021, the third wave of COVID variants has resulted in more restrictions imposed by the provincial and First Nations governments such as Chief and Council of each First Nations community.

**Transcribing, coding, and analyzing.** It took some time to transcribe the interviews as each of the interviews were responded to with a majority of *Anishinaabemowin*. I had an assistant who signed an oath of confidentiality as outlined in my ENREB submission. She transcribed the first two participants' interviews in draft form but I did the edits and finalized the interview transcriptions. Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic restrictions, I also transcribed the last participant interview on my own.

*Anishinaabemowin* is an oral language with no standard writing system. Kirkness (1998) wrote, "In addition, most oral languages were oral and had no written orthography (alphabet)" (p.48). The writing system used to transcribe the interviews was Roman orthography because the participants are familiar with it in the English system. The transcriptions took a lengthy amount of time to make sure all words in the *Anishinaabe* language were consistently transcribed. As the transcriber, it was a learning task at times, to listen and try to capture the sounds of words so that it would not be misread or worse not be deciphered by the participants. A few of the challenges, amongst others, of using Roman orthography to write the *Anishinaabe* language were the interchangeable sounds of the letters (d)-(t), (k)-(g), and the variations of vowel sounds compared to those of the Roman orthography. I wanted to make sure that the participants could read their transcribed interviews. I provided each participant with their transcriptions as recorded with a mixture of *Anishinaabemowin* and the English language for any further input, feedback, or revisions. As mentioned earlier, I was able to meet with each participant to ensure their satisfaction with their interview. I then began coding and analyzing their valuable information. I

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read each interview and chose information that related to my research question. I chose words and phrases that were similar from each of the interviews then I proceeded to include these in Appendix D – Coding and Analysis, to organize categorizations which formed the emergent themes.

I also went through the research questions from the interviews and filtered those that were exactly or very close to the same for each participant. I focused more on the conversation and stories from the participants rather than trying to look for specific answers to the questions. In Wilson's (2008) book, "Research is Ceremony", we are reminded that conversation brings forward that comfortableness of sharing information. Therefore, the research questions were used as a guide, as conversations led to other avenues whereby the participants freely shared their stories and knowledge. The questions were also useful in bringing the conversations back to the focus of the research study as the time factor also had to be considered. I stated in the ENREB submission that interviews would be kept to an hour for a maximum time limit.

Agar (1980, cited by Creswell, 2008) suggested you "...read the transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts" (p. 250). As I listened to the interviews and read through the transcriptions I started to get a sense of the information behind the participants' stories. There were similar words and phrases that emerged to begin forming common themes. Emergent themes were then formed from these common themes of the research questions (see Table 2). As I continued to reread the data and listen to the *Anishinaabemowin* in the interviews, embedded in their stories and life experiences were these very important emergent themes of language loss, retention, and revitalization (see Table 3).



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**Table 2 Alignment of Research Questions and Emergent Themes: Language Teacher Perspectives**

Research Questions	Emergent Themes
1. Tell me about yourself, where your education was, how you came to be an educator? How was school growing up?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Residential/Day school survivors</li> <li>-Teacher Certification through University Program</li> <li>-Negative school experience</li> </ul>
2. Please tell me about the school in which you work? How is it <i>Anishinaabemowin</i> or is it all English? How is the school environment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Many language speakers but use English</li> <li>-Majority of students do not speak the language</li> <li>-Most students understand with a minority who do not understand at all</li> </ul>
3. Do the students in your school speak the <i>Anishinaabe</i> language? In particular, in what areas do you notice it, in the early years, in the middle years or senior years?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The early years enjoy, retain, and want to learn</li> <li>-Gap in middle years – no consistent teaching of the language</li> <li>-The older grades take it as a course with a lot of writing</li> <li>-Do not hear children speaking the language in the school</li> <li>-Enunciation is different for <i>Anishinaabemowin</i> from English</li> <li>-Different movement of the tongue</li> <li>-Different sounding system</li> </ul>
4. How much do you as a teacher use the <i>Anishinaabemowin</i> language inside and outside of school? For example, do you use <i>Anishinaabemowin</i> the minute you enter your classroom? How about your students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use the language as much as possible.</li> <li>-Have to use 50/50 of <i>Anishinaabemowin</i> and English to make sure it is understood</li> <li>-Some students use short language sentences outside of school</li> </ul>
5. What do you think influenced the language loss piece? How are we losing the language? How do you see that?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Residential and Day school first and foremost</li> <li>-Forced to use English</li> <li>-Negative implication associated with speaking - students are embarrassed to speak the language</li> <li>-More needs to be done about the value of the language</li> </ul>
6. What are your thoughts about revitalizing methods, ways of revitalizing the language in the school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Update of curriculum and resources</li> <li>-More training for language teachers and all school staff</li> <li>-Involvement of leadership and community (i.e. community signs in the language)</li> <li>-Promotion of language activities and speaking of the language by all teachers to students</li> <li>-Need for consistency of teaching the language grade to grade</li> </ul>
7. What are your thoughts about the <i>Anishinaabe</i> language taught as a subject?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Helps to promote the language otherwise it would not be taught</li> <li>-Daily scheduled classes are needed for all classrooms</li> <li>-The language program needs to start in Nursery</li> <li>-Oral language never a written language</li> <li>-No standard form for writing the language</li> <li>-Older students get bored writing the language</li> </ul>
8. What would be the best way to revitalize language in the school - bilingual, immersion, language nests?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Not sure but bilingual would work as most students understand <i>Anishinaabemowin</i> but speak English</li> <li>-Need both languages - <i>Anishinaabemowin</i> and English</li> <li>-Immersion may be difficult</li> <li>-Term Language Nests is new</li> </ul>
9. What are your thoughts about teachers? You mention that there's not enough teachers and who's going to teach the language?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Language speakers are on a decline</li> <li>-On the verge of losing the language</li> <li>-Need to train language teachers</li> <li>-Language speakers in the school should be trained to teach the language</li> </ul>

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**Table 3 Three Emerging Themes from Participants: Language Loss, Retention, Revitalization**

Interviewee Liza	Interviewee Agnes	Interviewee Rochelle
<b>Language Loss</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Left community and noticed language loss on return – lines 68,69, p. 4</li> <li>-Most and foremost factor of language loss was residential school – line 173 p.9</li> <li>-Language speakers are on a decline – line 238 p.12</li> <li>-Fear that we won't have the language for long – lines 266-267 p.13</li> <li>-Know the meaning of the word but cannot enunciate it – line 315 p.16</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Influence of residential school – line 31 p.2</li> <li>-Could not speak English – lines 40-41 p.2</li> <li>-Evaluation in 1990 government took out language and native studies – line 210 p.8</li> <li>-Kids are embarrassed, ashamed to speak due to negative association – lines 222-226 p.9</li> <li>-Didn't teach own children language due to labelling resource – lines 251-253 p.10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Pressure to use English – line 171 p.8</li> <li>-Residential and Day schools influenced language loss – line 188-190 p.9</li> <li>-Lack of funding for language and culture programs – lines 185-186 p.9</li> <li>-Seen as special needs for not speaking English - line 404 p.19</li> <li>-Fear of being ostracized if speaking the language – line 409 p.20</li> </ul>
<b>Retention</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Writing and speaking the language are totally different – line 115 p.6</li> <li>-Retention – everyone in the home and community spoke the language – lines 192-193</li> <li>-Storytelling – learning new and proper use of words – lines 193-194 p.10</li> <li>-Our words in the language mean what it is we are talking about – lines 253-254 p.13</li> <li>-Not connecting with the different programs in the school – lines 389-390 p.19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Language was strong at home – lines 56-58 p.3</li> <li>-Kids learned and spoke the language with language teachers– lines 144-145 p.6</li> <li>-Kids need to see the language to use it – line 202 p.8</li> <li>-The classroom teachers helped each other and taught the language (before the evaluation in 1990) – line 232 p.9</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Many adult language speakers in the school – line 31 p.2</li> <li>-Language retained if parents spoke it – line lines 67-68 p.3</li> <li>-Early years retain and learn the language – line 78 p.4</li> <li>-Has to be repetitive – line 111 p.5</li> </ul>
<b>Revitalization</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Plan for continuum of curriculum with language teachers never happened – line 165-166 p.9</li> <li>-Revitalization– Chief and Council must help, listen, and know the importance of the language lines 225-228 p.12</li> <li>-Our language is valuable – lines 251 -252 p.13</li> <li>-Like having the language being taught as a subject – line 274 p.14</li> <li>-Teacher training programs for revitalizing the language would work – line 344 p. 17</li> <li>-Speaking on the local radio station using the language – line 360 p. 18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Fluent language speakers do not teach, speak, promote the language to children – lines 101-106 p.4</li> <li>-All staff have to help – line 124 p.5</li> <li>-No funds to pay language teachers properly – line 135 p.</li> <li>-Bilingual program would work to revitalize the language – line 155 p.6</li> <li>-Chief and Council speak and promote the language - line 185 p.7</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Many are wanting to learn the language – lines 73-74 p.4</li> <li>-Teach bilingually – line 104 p.5</li> <li>-Class time not adequate – line 217 p.10</li> <li>-Curriculum has to be updated, involve community and Elders – lines 327-330 p.16</li> <li>-Involvement of Chief, Council and Administration will be helpful – line 359 p.17</li> </ul>

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**Emergent Themes.** There have been numerous studies throughout Canada on Indigenous languages with no follow through or commitment for preserving them. Kirkness (2013) stated, “It has not happened [Aboriginal language foundation]; instead over the years, the federal government has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars engaging numerous task forces and other studies to determine the state of Aboriginal languages ad nauseam...” (p.145). This research study is a grassroots approach with participants who witness and experience the loss of their *Anishinaabe* language in their own community and school. By sharing their knowledge, it is hoped that the information will help to address areas of gaps with the *Anishinaabe* language in their school and community. The recent Act respecting Indigenous languages 2019-2020 will help provide the reassurance required to put forth plans and strategies to improve revitalization (Government of Canada, 2019). In the guide to *An Act respecting Indigenous languages: A Tool for First Nations Language Revitalization* (2019-2020), it is stated, “The ultimate goal, as supported and funded by the government through legislation, is to restore fluency in our ancestral languages and to normalize First Nations languages” (Government of Canada, 2019, p.2). The statement is a positive message that must be taken seriously and put into action in order for First Nations languages to survive. An important focal point in First Nations communities are the schools where the children are gathered to learn. The participants’ knowledge that is shared in this research study will help guide a process for their school. This will need support at the administrative level of the school and the community leadership level in order to realize the true intentions of revitalizing the language.

As shown in Table 3 the research questions that were asked of the participants were not as sequential when presented during the interviews. The participants responses were more conversational with answers coming from within those conversations related to the research

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study. In one instance, Liza shares a story about a family caregiver who uses an *Anishinaabemowin* word that she had never heard. She shares with her mother that one day she would use a higher level of *Anishinaabemowin*:

*Gooding a-koh ka-goh ahweh key-i-kitdo aki-an-zee. I-ee kyn-gee-kan-duzeen o-go-do-gwen ee-yaa. Ta-bishkoo moonaashkwe go-zee-ung wa-da odaabaaning aneesh mishtutim-mook. Dug-outaynsh kee-a-tamma-gut ima, ahszhi-i-kitdoot ka-goh. Kaw-neen, ni-we-ma-shka, key-i-kitdo-see, ka-goh pakaan key-i-kidto na-uh. Ta-bishko we-we-ma-shkat, pakaan ka-goh key-i-kidto, ahszhi ga-gway-ji-muk, “me-ee-yaa we-ma-shka-yun”. Aneesh kyn-kabih gi kan-duzeen oguddo-gwaan ee-yaa ka-gee-i-kitdoot. Mi ni-mama ahszhi-inuk gooding mom din-na (pause) gooding waa-mo-chi ky-ee-shpuuk nee-iszhi gee-git Anishinaabe-moong gee-ee-na, na-uh.*

(Liza, lines 196-203, p.10)

Through the story she relays the message that this was how the language was learned and the interest to want to learn was natural. She does not provide an answer by simply making a statement, she provides a real-life experience to make the point on the value of the *Anishinaabe* language. Hence, the rationale recommended by Agar (1980), cited by Creswell, (2008) to read the interviews in their entirety several times makes Liza’s story relevant.

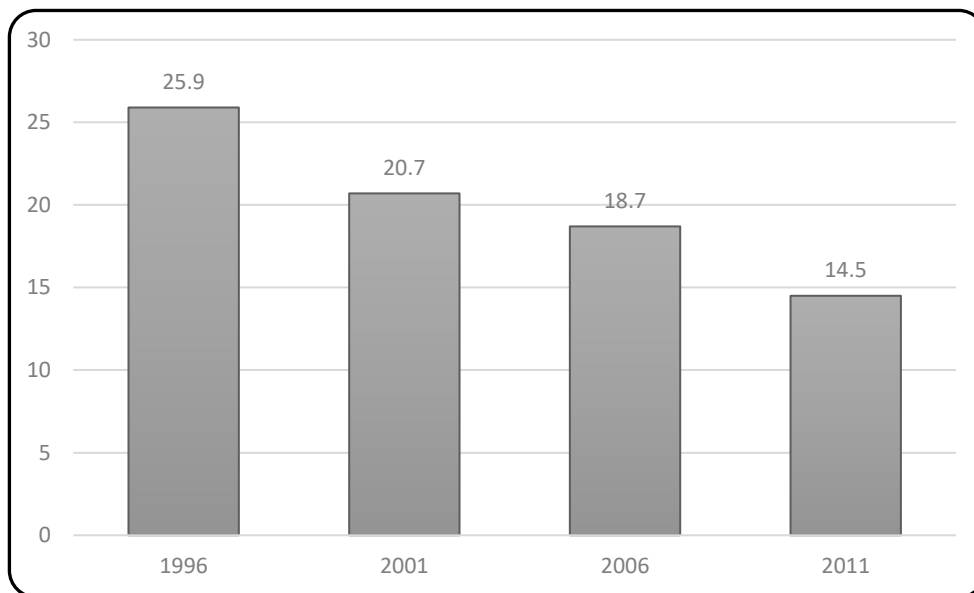
**Positionality.** Though the study is not about my opinions or thoughts, I felt my positioning as an *Anishinaabekwe* and fluent speaker of the *Anishinaabe* language was necessary in this study. Creswell (2013, cited by M. Scott, 2017) “All writing is ‘positioned’ and within a stance” (p.92). Therefore, I felt it was important for my participants to speak freely using the language(s) that was most comfortable for them to use. Especially when I, as the researcher am fluent in *Anishinaabemowin*. I found it remarkable that the participants could articulate their

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thoughts so well in the *Anishinaabe* language. I wanted to find out from my participants about the *Anishinaabe* language loss and how it could be retained and revitalized. As a First Nations educator working with First Nations community schools in Manitoba it has been a concern that the First Nations languages and knowledge systems are overtaken by the focus of following the English language education learning system (Battiste, 2013).

Even though, I am an *Anishinaabe* and a longtime educator who has worked in First Nations schools as a teacher and administrator, I found myself and fellow *Anishinaabe* colleagues pushing the English system. The expectation of the education authority was to follow the guidelines and policies of the provincial school system who mandate areas such as accreditation and hours required to teach subjects such as English language arts. The realization that there was little to no recognition of the First Nations language and knowledge system within the school curriculum has been a constant struggle which needs to be addressed. Inclusion of Indigenous language was always an afterthought. We are now at a stage where all the Indigenous languages across Canada are endangered and are on a continual decline as shown in Figure 6 (Statistics Canada, 2016). The participants that I interviewed felt very strongly about the survival of the *Anishinaabe* language but also voiced concerns that if there are no strategies and supports especially by those in their school and community or proper funding they fear it will be lost.

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**Figure 6 State of Indigenous Languages in Canada**

Aboriginal mother tongue dropped from almost 26% in 1996 to 14% in 2011, close to 50% drop in 15 years. (Census 2011). Adapted from Canadian Heritage Canada. Statistics Canada 2016

**Residential/day school.** The residential/day school experiences were a topic that was well articulated by the participants when speaking about language loss. When I asked Liza about language loss she replied,

The, *i-ee* the most and foremost was the “residential school”. *Taa ba ji, key sunnug-izih-yook, ta Anishinaabe-moot, apooshka, mittin-i-goh-wohn Anishinaabemowin ga-chi-naa da ba-baashi-sha-whe-goo-wun, ama chji gizzy-be giddo-nan-i-gwan, na-uh.*  
(Liza, line 173 -175, p. 9)

The closest English translation would be, “They [priests and nuns] were very strict about *Anishinaabemowin*, if you got caught for sure you would get a whipping/strapping or have your mouth washed out [with soap]. The *Anishinaabe* words are descriptive with emphasis when

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spoken. The word “strict” does not carry the feeling of fear and absoluteness like the *Anishinaabe* word used in the statement. To understand the *Anishinaabe* language is to capture the definitive meaning of the words that are spoken. It is a valuable language but more importantly it is a language of an original First Nations people in Manitoba. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015) document, calls to action, that the Government of Canada acknowledge Aboriginal languages (p.2). *Anishinaabemowin* is the language of the *Anishinaabe* people and this must be realized and supported.

Liza also spoke of a token system used in the residential school that was used to report or tell on each other when using the *Anishinaabe* language. She stated:

*I-ee a-koh key-do-da-mook, i-ee tokens a-koh gee meen-i-gooh-min, go-chji e-dook one, one square. Yellow, key izshi-naago-doon, numunch-edook mi-nik ima ga-a-taygin ten kinabuch di-nan-dum. Baggy-an-sing, akina gee-me-ni-goo-min un-numay-gee-szhi-guk, un-ih ahszay-ga-ee-yahng. Eeshpin a-wee-yah noon-doot Anishinaabe-moot token ki-ka-gway-ji-ma. Me-a-kwe ka-iszhi do-da-mung, a-kina a-koh tokens gee-mamoon-dah-na-min ky-iszhi me-nung-it a-koh pezik a-wee-ya neechi-awgun-ninaan, chocolate aneesh key-me-nigazzoh. Mi iszhi share-ee-yaang, chocolate-anse.*

(Liza, lines 176-183, p 9)

Liza describes the token system as a method used to keep them from using the *Anishinaabe* language. As she tells her story, she describes in detail the items that were used and how they would help each other to overcome such punitive measures. As she ends her story she says, “*Me-i-yaah montch, me-i-yaah aahpi-ji gunna-buch, o-gee-goot-tahn-naa*” (Liza, line 187, p.10). She reiterated in reflection pointing out that the use of punishment was what was feared the most.

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As a young child of about age six, Agnes also shared memories of punishments. She recalls seeing beatings and being placed in isolation for anyone who spoke the *Anishinaabe* language:

...*i-gih-own-dug-ga-na-mi-goo* (you were stopped by being beaten), *amaa* (or) *i-ee goh-jih i-gee-ahsigo* (you were put somewhere) *ta andaa oon-jih-jeengoh-nub-yuhn* (to go and kneel) like you know you had to go in a corner or else on your knees and, yeah you were punished when you spoke your language” (Agnes, lines 36-38, p.2).

The consequences were an extreme punishment for children so young. She chose not to speak very much because of what she saw and not knowing how to speak English she remained quiet. She remembers how the English language was enforced when she entered school at the young age of six:

But, then as we went into the *I-ee da kinnow-maagoo-wang aneen chi izshi shanganasheemoowang* (when in the school system, we were taught how to speak English), we started speaking the language because that’s what we were forced to speak...the English language. (Agnes, line 54, p.2)

When Agnes spoke of being forced to speak English only, the tone in her voice was one of disapproval and anger. I am sure that learning the English was not the difficult part but rather how they were forced to learn it. These were difficult memories to share for Agnes.

Rochelle also recalls the punishments and how difficult residential day school was for her. She also went into the school system not knowing a word of English. She shared a personal story of how she suffered with what she referred to as ‘accidents’:

I must have been in grade one...*Aa-huh* (yes)...grade one and when we tried to speak in Ojibway *mi ky izshi puk-it-yoo-igwung* (then we were hit) or something. And so, we



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couldn't even speak it. Even to go to the washroom, we couldn't even...I couldn't even ask in English because I didn't know how to speak in English. *Mi-aszhi* (then it) you know...I had so many accidents...until you know...I learned how to speak in English.

(Rochelle, lines 126-133, p.6)

She also shared that because of her strong background in speaking the *Anishinaabe* language and struggling with the English language she was seen as a special needs child. She stated:

I remember when I first started school I was a fluent Ojibway speaker who did not know any English at all. I had so much difficulty in school. I chose to be quiet and hardworking but they saw me as a special needs child because I couldn't speak the English language. (Rochelle, lines 402-404, p.19)

In her final thoughts about struggling with English she stated that when she grew older and had children she wanted to make sure her children learned English so they would not be "ostracized by society." (Rochelle, line 409, p.20). She then stated it was not the right thing to do by not teaching her own children *Anishinaabemowin*. She now teaches her children and grandchildren to speak *Anishinaabemowin*.

As mentioned by Rochelle in wanting to make sure her children were not ostracized, all participants shared some thoughts about their children not fluently speaking the *Anishinaabe* language. Two of the participants shared their reasons for not teaching the fluency of the language while all three pointed out that the language is understood when speaking to their children but not spoken. Agnes tells about how she never really taught her children how to speak the *Anishinaabe* language:

Like even speaking about myself, my kids, one of the reasons why I didn't...like they understand but they don't speak it...if they spoke the language that was one thing against

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them. It was a negative thing and either they were uh classified as being dumb because they spoke your language uh *Anishinaabemowin* and so that was one of the things I didn't want. I didn't want my kids to be...labelled...Like right away, they would go into the resource room. (Agnes, lines 248-255, p.10)

It is evident through the comments of the participants that their experiences of consequence engrained the belief of the inferiority of *Anishinaabemowin* to the English language which greatly impacted the choice of language for their children. Sadly, this is the truth for many First Nations.

While interviewing Liza, I shared my thoughts about neglecting and not taking a stronger stance in teaching my own children the *Anishinaabe* language. She offered this response:

*Kyn aneesh ee-ya ki-dizhi-naga-dan-du-zee-min ooshki-aw-di-zee-ung na-uh, ooh-good-do-gwen whengi kitchi ee-nan-da-gook. Ni-mamma ka-neen gee-di-bah-ji-moo-tuk, "ka-gwe I-ee Anishinaabemoonado ki nooshayuk, ki tabinoojee-imuk ta-bi-da. Kitchi eenan-da-goot. eeshpin gooding Meen-i-goo-iz-zee-ott aneen oo-da-da-soo-kunyawn kay-iszhi nissootawat gooding shaganasheemowat."* (Liza, lines 410-414, p. 20)

She responded that such thoughts do not enter our minds when we are young. She received the teaching of the sacredness of *Anishinaabemowin* from her mother who told her to hold onto the language and to teach it to her grandchildren and children for one day if they are gifted how will they understand their spirit helpers. The message from Liza's mother is important to the survival of First Nations languages and cultures.

Joseph (2018) wrote, "When children returned home for a visit or finished school, they frequently felt alien in their families because they had been taught that their language, culture, and traditions were evil" (p.65). The residential/day schools caused many traumas for those who

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attended them. The resilient nature of Indigenous peoples has enabled them to move forward as proven by these participants who retained their *Anishinaabe* language and completed post-secondary studies to become certified educators. However, these abuses have continued to negatively impact the *Anishinaabe* language from past generations to where we are at present, in the state of endangerment for all Indigenous languages in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016).

**Retention of the language.** There is a close interconnectedness between the terms “retention” and “revitalization” in how they are referred to in this research study. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines retention as, “to keep in mind or memory” and revitalization as, “to give new life or vigor to” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). The reason I state this interconnectedness is that memory and the idea of giving life or vigor to, is needed in combination for the survival of the *Anishinaabe* language.

All three participants shared that they were able to retain their *Anishinaabe* language through their immediate families whose first language was *Anishinaabemowin*. They recall that it was all that was spoken in the home and by those who lived around them. In regards to the present day, when asked if they noticed any students speaking the language in the school, two of the participants shared that the Kindergarten students enjoyed, learned, and retained the language. However, there were mixed responses about students speaking the language. Liza stated,

*Goot-ti-yawn ima aa-yaak* (There is one group that are here) one family *nisswi ima duhyuuk abinoonjii-anse-suk* (I have three children), *me-ing-gee-yak Anishinaabe-mowuk* (they speak the *Anishinaabe* language). *Wee-i-di-ongee I-eeng, Ikwance kaa-nu-buch inni oo-shzi-shay-uh* (They are from over there, I think they are *Ikwance*’s grandchildren). *Anishinaabe-mow-see-uk ingi abinoonjii-anse suk* (the children speak the *Anishinaabe*

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language), *shaganasheemoowuk dush, weenaw aneesh eta-goh* (They speak English because they are the only ones). (Liza, lines 103-106, p.6)

In Liza's comments, she mentioned that she teaches three younger children from a certain family that spoke the language fluently. It was encouraging to hear that there were still young children speaking *Anishinaabemowin*. However, it was not spoken by the children publicly. It was not clear why the children would not speak *Anishinaabemowin* when they spoke it fluently. Liza's thoughts on why they do not speak the language in public is because they are the only ones who speak *Anishinaabemowin* in the school. This is an important area to address and pursue with the children throughout the school. It would provide an opportunity for the children to learn why the *Anishinaabe* language is valuable. This would address the issue of not speaking the language in public without feeling intimidated to speak it freely.

Agnes makes the following statements about her observations on children speaking the *Anishinaabe* language:

Well, *ky-een-aneesh a-yaa abinoonjii-yuk i-ee nah iszhi gaa-gee-gi-doh-see-ook*  
*Anishinaabemoseeook* (there are no children who want or try to speak the *Anishinaabe*  
 language) *missaw ingeeya i-ee abinoojii-yuk ka kan-daa-mowaat dah-iszhi*  
*Anishinaabemowat* (even the children who can speak the language) *ky-een ky-een a-yaa*  
*iszhi-gee-kidto-seeook* (none of them speak in that way [using the *Anishinaabe*  
 language]), *a-ding-goh i-ee kee-a-gujee-ot chi-iszhi-ga-gee-gi-dwat* (it is as though they  
 are embarrassed/ashamed to speak that way). (Agnes, lines 71-73, p.3)

Agnes stated that children do not speak *Anishinaabemowin* even if they are able. In her observations of the children there are no conversations in the language. She is uncertain of why

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the children do not use the language but thinks it could be because they are embarrassed or ashamed of the language.

When I asked Rochelle about the children speaking the *Anishinaabe* language she shared that many of the children did not speak *Anishinaabemowin* but further stated that did not mean that all of them were not able to speak *Anishinaabemowin*.

*Ka-neen akina. ka-neen akina.* (not all, not all) *Nee-bawa ween abinoojii-uk oo-niss-too-tahn-naw* (many of the children understand [the language]) *kyn dush* (they don't) *aa-gujeeook chi Anishinaabemowat* (they are shy/embarrassed to speak the *Anishinaabe* language). *Ama oo-goot-tun-naw chi pa-pee-gazoowat* (or they are afraid to speak it in fear that someone will laugh at them). (Rochelle, lines39-41, p.2)

Rochelle was quick to state that many of them understood the language. She pointed out that the children do not speak the language because they are shy, embarrassed or afraid that someone will laugh at them. In my younger years, I had First Nation friends from other communities who could understand the *Anishinaabe* language but could not speak it. At that time, I could not grasp why they could understand the language and not speak it. In hind sight, it would have been better to encourage them so they would feel more comfortable in learning the language. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies.

It is apparent in the participants' statements that there is something that is keeping the children from speaking the language even though they understand when the language is spoken. The participants provided some reasons such as being shy, embarrassed, or ashamed but there was no clear definitive reason of why this situation is occurring. According to Battiste (2013), "The public image of First Nations governance and peoples has generated self-doubt in students, leading them to discount their inherent capacities and gifts, their elders' wisdom and knowledge,

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and their tribal values and teachings” (p.65). When speaking of the children in the school the participants conveyed a strong sense that the *Anishinaabe* language was still understood by the majority of students, with some that spoke it, and no real consensus of how many did not know the language at all.

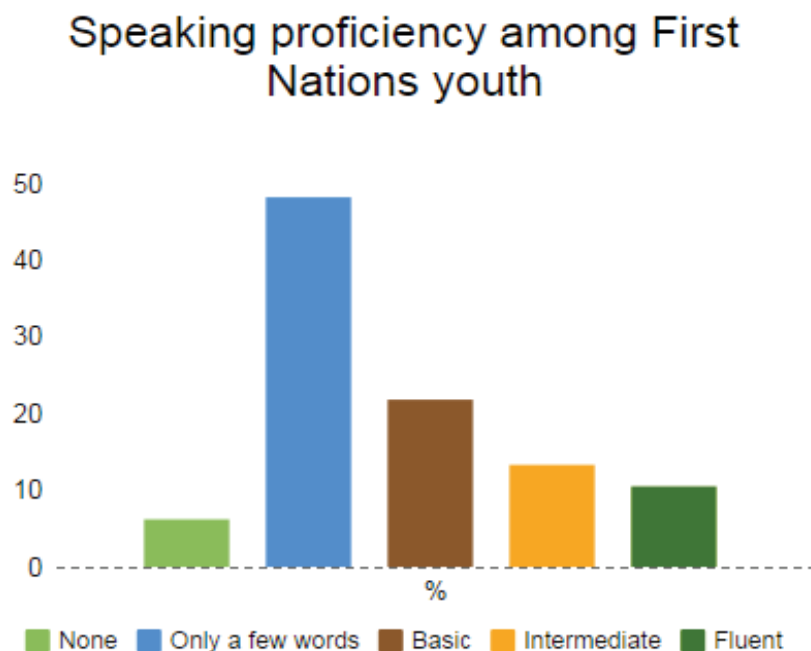
The information about the students’ language situation from the participants was similar to a study that was conducted by the First Nations Information Governance Centre using a First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey (FNREEES). The survey involved children ages 11 and under, up to adults 18 and older in 250 First Nations communities throughout Canada (First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey, 2013). As illustrated in Figure 7, it is evident that First Nations youth do have knowledge of an Indigenous language at varying degrees (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2013). It is a hopeful sign that Indigenous languages are still known by the children and youth but at the same time discouraging that there continues to be a steady decline. It will take planning and proper support for the revitalization of Indigenous languages with time being of the essence as speakers of the Indigenous languages are declining. Kirkness (1998) reminds us, “The last generation of fluent speakers are with us. Without their help, the work toward the survival of the languages will be more difficult” (p.140). Liza also reminds us that we are continuing to lose our speakers by stating the following:

*Kyn i-ga-gush-kito-see-min eeshpin. Me-goh aneesh oongowak a-yaa na-uh*, the language speakers are on a decline. *Me-goh* we’re on a verge of losing it...*da-iszhi-sah ee-yaa eeshpin. eeshpin neebawa aaya wee-koo-ji-too-sik* (it can happen if more people do not try to revive the language), *ki-naa-toozoomin* (there are not many of us) *dush aneesh*. (Liza, lines 237-242, p.12)

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Liza spoke about the possibility of not having people left who carry the knowledge of the *Anishinaabe* language and said, “language speakers are on a decline”. The language speakers, in my understanding, are those who maintain a rich vocabulary of the *Anishinaabe* language which are usually the elders. She was also very serious in stating “we’re on the verge of losing it” if we do not come together to do something to save the *Anishinaabe* language.

**Figure 7 Speaking Proficiency among First Nations Youth**



70% of First Nations youth on reserve who reported having “excellent” First Nations language skills also reported high levels of life balance (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being), compared to 45% of those who said they had “poor” First Nations language skills. 82.8% of First Nations youth on reserve reported having some knowledge of a First Nations language. (FNREEES 2013). Adapted from Heritage Canada 2013.

There were other factors that the participants shared, particularly the need for more time for classes and ways the *Anishinaabe* language needs to be taught. These factors can be categorized as either retention or revitalization, I chose to categorize both more time for classes and teaching of the languages as retention. All participant’s comments showed that they had a

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commitment and genuine interest in giving the time needed to teach or provide the programs for the children. The general message was to have a timeframe that would ensure consistent exposure for the children to retain and learn to speak the language. Liza stated, “*nooch ka gaa-bah da-minno-sa eeshpin* everyday *dawaaba-magaw* each class (it would work even better if I could see each class everyday) (Liza lines 276-277 p.14).

All three participants agreed that the *Anishinaabe* language needed to be repetitive through various ways of teaching. One of the ways that the participants spoke about teaching the language was the need to be repetitive as it is an oral language where the sounds are important to articulate. This is explained by Liza who stated:

*i-ee i-keegeedowin-in-naan dush, mee-gweht eta goh ee-ya i-keegeedowin-in-naan, kyn weekaa kee-oo-szhibegaad-daa-si-noon ka-goh mi-bi-gee-nuk, o-way noomay I-ee ka-geemaji oszhi-be-gadahk. Like its oral. Mi-ee-dook aneesh ta-bishkoo, kyn ween Nursery gi-kinow-maa-seek, dun-a-gee-gaa-gway-da Kindergarten dush, Ka-ween ogush-ki-too-seenaw, ji-ozih-be-gay-ot. Me-gway eta, gee-gitowin, gee-gitowin. Me-gway eta goh chi ee-na-daw chi ki-ki-nah sa bi toy-ih-yat, bizzani-goh, bizzanni-goh di-nahk kee-tom akina ga-goh, neebawa da-sing.*

(Liza, lines 72-78, p.4)

In short this is the English translation.

“It is what we speak, it is our language. It was never written; only recently has it been written. It is an oral language. I asked to teach Nursery but was denied but teach Kindergarten. The children cannot write the language. I speak, and speak, and speak so they hear and repeat what I say over, and over again.”



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Rochelle also stated, “*Mi-nung-gah*, yeah...yes. They try their best but they need constant repetition of words and phrases” (Rochelle, lines 117-118, p.6). Agnes commented on the importance of listening and sounding out the words. She recalls talking to the Education Director to suggest for all school staff to help by modeling the *Anishinaabe* language, “one of the suggestions I had was just sound it out” (Agnes, line 114, p.5).

This type of teaching takes commitment and a strong voice but is necessary for the children to hear the proper sounds for articulating the words and to understand their meaning. In order for the language to continue it has to remain in the memory to remember the words, the sounds, and meanings as demonstrated by the work and advice of the participants.

When speaking about the higher grades, Rochelle mentioned that the older students get bored because they are taught by writing the language and not by fun activities or projects. These were her responses when I asked her about her thoughts on how to address the needs of the older students.” Right now, there’s no interest because its long, boring, writing mostly for them.” (Rochelle, line 292, p.14) She later adds, “Yeah, they find it boring cause it’s so uuh hard for them to really understand it aaye...Yes, and they’re not going to remember. Maybe if you make it repetitive or I don’t know, make it fun.” (Rochelle, lines 313-315, p. 15). There was concern that the program for the older grades was not capturing their interest in learning or strengthening their *Anishinaabe* language.

Agnes brings up the point that there should be signs in the *Anishinaabe* language throughout the school and community for students to read and pick up on the importance of the language. She stated:

I think we need to *i-ee* to get to our language *nooch eeya jii-a-ba-jit-chi-gah-da-ma-guk apooshka eeshpin a-dye-i-gummick iszhibee-ga-da-ma-guk* the kids start seeing

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those words. I think they need to see them in order for them to start using our language. In the Anishinaabe language she stated, “It is better to use the Anishinaabe language all over, to read signs like ‘store’ written in the language.” These were a few of the ways that the participants spoke about the retention of the language. One of the things that came to mind about what was shared is the amount of work that each of the participants were putting forward in their efforts to help retain the *Anishinaabe* language. Another was the need for planning how to better structure the workload for fear of burnout for these participants as they continue their *Anishinaabemowin* programming in the school.

**Revitalization of the language.** The participants shared some of their teaching strategies, thoughts, and recommendations on how to revive the *Anishinaabe* language. A common statement from the three participants was the support needed from all staff in the school. Each participant referenced the large number of staff who were fluent speakers of the *Anishinaabe* language and the need for their assistance to help teach, encourage, and speak the language with the students. Agnes shared these comments:

*Mi-aneesh ee-yaa* that’s what puzzles me. *Ta-bishkoo oowa ga-anooke-yan i-ee* we provide these activities *da-Anishinaabemowat abinoojii-yuk ta-bishkoo i-ee* we even do words over the P.A. and I try to encourage the teachers, like even the ones that don’t speak the language. But the ones that are fluent in our language *Kyn ka-weenaw oogikinoowamawseeaw abinoonjii-ya* it’s just like word of the day and you know going over it, say the last few minutes before home time, let’s go over the words that we were taught. Our language words *i.ee da-Anishnaabemowat apooshka ingeeya ka-gi-kan-da-mowat, aneen chi-iszhi-Anishinaabemowat, kyn keegi-dooseeook ka-mah* they don’t encourage the kids even if their fluent in the language to speak. (Agnes, lines 98-105, p.4)

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All participants were also in agreement with the need for teacher training programs to have more trained language teachers. When asked about teacher training, Rochelle commented: “Yeah, I think they should train young people, or even people that speak fluent Ojibway to become teachers.” (Rochelle, line 160, p.8) There is not only a shortage of language teachers, there is also a funding challenge. Agnes speaks about losing qualified language teachers due the inability of providing a proper salary.

Well it would umm... because the *i-ee* one of the problems we had was *ahh*...there wasn't ....we had two real good language speakers and they couldn't get the pay for them to stay. *Umba*, and I mean they were really good at what they were doing. But, because of funding there wasn't enough money for them to *i-ee* keep them and so I think *eeshpin* if we had the money *i-ee* we would have had – they were very good. We've lost *a-yuk* these two resourceful people that speak the language and were teaching the kids the language and then now we end up with nothing. (Agnes, line 134-139, p.5)

There were qualified language teachers that were working in the school but due to lack of funding they were not able to retain them. It is unfortunate that this situation occurred when language speakers are at a decline. The participants, as language speakers and educators will eventually retire and as a result younger newly trained language teachers will be required. A succession program would benefit and address the eventual aging out of language teachers. This would involve the mentoring and training of younger staff to take over the jobs for current language teachers who will eventually retire.

When I asked if they would consider using an immersion, bilingual, or language nest program to teach the language, two of the participants felt it would be best to use a bilingual program while one was unsure of what program would work best. The reasoning for the bilingual

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program was based on having the use of both the *Anishinaabe* and English language to provide an assurance of understanding. Rochelle mentions that she teaches in a bilingual manner:

“Probably fifty percent...because you know most of them don’t speak Ojibway. So, you have to... as you speak Ojibway you have to translate it. Because if they don’t understand then they’re already not listening.” (Rochelle, lines 100-102, p.5) There was no evidence of any of the language programs such the bilingual, immersion, or language nests. My reasoning for asking the question about the language programs was to see if there were any specific programs or models in place.

Liza described her use of themes and the need to have a continuum from the early years through to the high school program. Her ideas of incorporating a ladder approach with the curriculum were shared amongst her language teacher colleagues and administration with positive feedback.

*Mi-gy-iszhee-nah-gaw, gee-nisso-noo-keemin aneesh na-uh. Neen, tagoh mi-naw neesh, high school tagoh intermediate ingeeya four, five, and six. Oma kinama-gay-ann, oo-good-o-gwen kinama-gay-ann awa meema-oonjih kaween nooch neebawa, ta-goh kaween high school nooch neebawa,, tashko September kita michi review oo-good-o-gwen kinama-gay-ann. Weengah api-ji, key-jee-kan-da-mook, ka-gat mi-gay-iszhisahk.*

(Liza, lines 153-158)

Liza with her colleagues describes how they would work together by teaching the same themes with a review and more information at a higher level as the students progress from grade to grade. She further stated: “*Mi-ka-nee-ka key-iszhissa-sinoon. Eh huh key-kidto oma principal pezik ikwe, oma, key-aya, da mino-sa ee-yaa.*” (Liza, line 162, .9) It never happened, there was

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never a follow through with the plan due to lack of collaboration and needed support. This is another indication for the need of specific programming.

Rochelle stated the need for a revised language curriculum with the support and input from community Elders, members, and school staff:

Yeah, and the curriculum has to be updated. Like most of the stuff I see is just from a long ago when it first came out. It needs to be added to... you know. To improve on language recovery. I think we need to update the curriculum every year or add to it. We will need community members, elders especially to be a part of the language initiative.

(Rochelle, line 327-330, p.16)

The planning would have to include informational sessions on the current programming to make all the invited members aware of what is currently being done. This would have to be done before engaging in any think tanks. It would also be helpful to request assistance from the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centres' Language and Culture Department to move the initiative forward.

When I asked about different ways that language loss can be addressed, Agnes commented: "Well I know that *ta- bishkoo* there's like a lot of development of resources... too... I mean there's a lot of resources out there and uh...I don't know if they're being used." (Agnes, lines 178-180, p.7) Agnes makes note that many resources have been developed and are available both within the school and from outside entities that are not fully utilized. This again speaks to the need for coordination of the *Anishinaabe* language program.

The three participants all felt strongly on the support needed from the Chief and Council to help reinforce the importance of the language, not only in the school but throughout the community. The participants shared that the present Chief is a fluent speaker who has taken

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opportunities to address the community using the *Anishinaabe* language. The overall point on leadership support was the idea of awareness and working together to help promote and work on revitalization strategies for the *Anishinaabe* language. Liza comments:

... oongowak gka-nit-tung-izzwaat, ogima-kaan tagoh ungijigunuk mee-ingeeaaak aneesh uh..da wee-jee-gwang...da-bizzin-da-mowaat, da-kan-da-mowaat, kitchi-in-nan-dagoot. Kitchi-in-nan-dagoot api-ji ki-gee-gi-do-inin-nan. Eeshpin, paa-ka-ji mama-mi-nan-da-mowat ee-yaa...

(Liza, lines 225-228, p.12)

In translation, Liza stated, the ones that are in leadership, the Chief and Councillors, they are the ones to help us. They need to listen, to know that the language is very sacred, our way of speaking. If they can remember to come to that realization. The statements made by Liza encompass the thoughts of all three participants regarding the role of the leadership in supporting the importance of the *Anishinaabe* language. In turn the language teachers have to realize that in order for the support to happen they have to inform and share the information on how to revitalize the *Anishinaabe* language.

As I read, reread, and listened to the interviews there were underlying challenges that need to be addressed. However, there were many positive things about the *Anishinaabe* language that were mentioned by the participants. The most important was the fluency of the language amongst the staff in the school as referenced by the participants. I once heard an older gentleman tell a story about our Indigenous languages. He spoke of the dead leaves that fall and pile up on the ground and as the seasons change they get covered with snow but when spring arrives and one goes to dig beneath those leaves there you find new life. He said our Indigenous languages may seem lost but if we look deep enough they can begin to grow once more.

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In this chapter, I have pointed out the importance of a balanced approach of both Indigenous and western methodologies. The similarities between the two methodologies provided me, as the researcher, to be able to conduct interviews that were comfortable for the interviewees and myself. As an *Anishinaabekwe*, it was important to follow Indigenous protocols and then at the same time abide by western protocols. During this research study, I had to work around the COVID 19 Pandemic and through prayer and good fortune I was able to continue and complete the interviews. As I worked through the transcripts of the participants' interviews by coding and analyzing the information which transformed into themes that were very valuable to this research. In the next chapter, I will summarize the findings of my research on the loss and revitalization of *Anishinaabemowin*.

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**Chapter 5****Reflections**

**Three contributing factors.** The intent of this thesis was to examine factors related to the loss and revitalization of the *Anishinaabe* language in a First Nations school in Manitoba. Along with the research through interviews it was important to include my positioning as an *Anishinaabekwe* and fluent speaker of the language. By doing so I wanted to provide an essential understanding of the value of the *Anishinaabe* language to First Nations peoples' culture and knowledge systems. In the *Anishinaabe* language it is referred to as *mino-pimatis(z)iiwin* (journey of good life). The loss of Indigenous languages in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016) continues to be a growing concern and has been voiced by First Nations leaderships including many Indigenous and allied scholars across Canada. It has been well documented with the inclusion of many government funded studies (Kirkness, 2013)

As written in Chapter 1, the three main contributing factors identified from this research for Indigenous language loss were colonization, the federal government's directive to follow provincial curriculum, and the official languages act of Canada. These 3 factors are all interconnected in how they have affected the language loss of First Nations people and in particular within the school system. A significant factor of colonization was the residential school system. A study of the residential school system was conducted across Canada with residential school survivors and written in a report titled, *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015). The report was a study conducted to educate people about the history and impact of the residential schools. It is best stated by Tuhiwai- Smith (2008) as a system set up to destroy the language and home life of the Indigenous people in Canada (p.72).



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As part of the school system in educating Indigenous people, the government of Canada through departments such as Indigenous Services Canada (formerly Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) continue to mandate provincial curriculum for First Nations schools throughout Canada (Kirkness, 1998) with the emphasis on the English language system. It is important to consider adaptations in the school curriculum in order to overcome the challenges in incorporating the First Nations languages, cultures, and knowledge systems to the English language system (Battiste, 2013). The *Official Languages Act* (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (2021) also impacts language loss by recognizing English and French as the official languages in Canada causing further decline of Indigenous languages. As stated by Kirkness (1998), this is the homeland of the First Nations languages (p.8). They are the original languages of this land, there is nowhere else to go and learn them if they are lost.

**Participants' perspectives.** In addressing my research question, *what are the factors identified by the participants that lead to language loss in a First Nations school and what can they do to reverse the trend of language loss?* Through my research, I listened to the voices of the First Nations educators who are the frontline workers teaching the *Anishinaabe* language. They are the few fluent speakers who Kirkness (2013) reminded us that are steadily declining. It is through their hard work and dedication that the vision to keep the *Anishinaabe* language alive for the younger generations is possible in the school. Through the interviews of the First Nations educators, the first and foremost factor, as one of the participants stated, of language loss was the residential school system. In sharing their stories and life experiences, they described the traumas of how the *Anishinaabe* language was silenced to become nonexistent when they attended residential school.

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In the interview with Liza, she shared an interesting fact about a statement made to her by a linguist professor who taught a *Saulteaux* (*Anishinaabe* language) course while she was attending university. She stated:

*I-ee kee-ki-tdo mitasaw aki a-nee izshi-saak 10 years i-kitdo asha i-kga-waabun-daam,*  
 (What he said was in 10 years you will see) *aa-sha i-gka-ni ooni-toom I-ee, kee-ki-dtoo-*  
*win. Omushkigook eta goh oo-way-ti kee-ya-* (you will begin to lose the language that you  
 speak. Only the Cree from the north) *di-noong ga-ayawat ween-naw eta, me-gii-eway eta*  
*gi-nanshz ween-na-wa, oguna-wane-* (will keep their language for a longer time)  
*daanaa-waa. Kayweenawaa dush gooding ogawonny-toon-nawaa,* (but they will begin to  
 lose it too) *gee a-net-awa a-neesh na a-kin-na a-wee-ya oma Ishkone-igunning Gi-i-aye*  
*100% wain-nih aki-na kee ba-ngo Anishinaabe-moh.* (I didn't believe him because  
 everyone, 100% spoke only the *Anishinaabe* language). (Liza lines 50-55, p.3)

She goes on to state that she was away from the community for 6-7 years and on her return, there were only 50-60% who used the *Anishinaabe* language fluently. It would seem that the prediction of the linguist would be from the knowledge of knowing the dominance of the English language system. It is unfortunate that a prevention strategy was not taught if this type of information was known at the time the course was being taught. Liza's story is also a reminder of the intergenerational impacts of the powerful dominance of the western eurocentric system or imperialism as referred to by Tuhiwai Smith, (2012) and its impacts on Indigenous peoples' language and culture.

**Residential school influence on loss.** After reviewing the interviews and analyzing the information, my findings were that the *Anishinaabe* language loss for the participants started with the residential school system. A place where fear was instilled with brutal (corporal)

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punishments if they spoke the *Anishinaabe* language and they were young children when they entered the residential school system. In their stories, they shared that the strength of retaining their *Anishinaabe* language was from their families within their homes and community surroundings when they went home for holidays and after they had left the residential school. The *Anishinaabe* language was their first language as proven by their statements of not knowing how to speak the English language when they entered the residential school system. Agnes recalls, “*Ki-een gee-gi-caan-duzseen aneen day-iszhi shaganasheemoowan*” (I didn’t know how to speak English). (lines 40-41, p.2). It was also apparent from the interviews that the English language was not dominant in their homes. All three participants recall that the *Anishinaabe* language was all their parents and family spoke. One of the participants stated, “*Babaa Aneesh I-ee kyn, kaween kgee shaganasheemoosee* (My dad didn’t speak English) (lines 220-221, p.11). Their stories of the residential school system provide a starting point of where they began to see the changes in the loss of the *Anishinaabe* language.

**Intergenerational impacts.** There continues to be intergenerational impacts from the residential school system even though the last one to close was in 1996 (Battiste, 2013). The residential school system’s legacy was to “kill the Indian in the child” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) by taking away their language, culture, and Indigenous knowledge systems. Even though there has been an end to the era of the residential school system the enforcement by the federal government to follow the provincial curriculum in First Nations schools continues to impede the First Nations school system’s ability to teach Indigenous languages (Kirkness, 2013).

**Provincial school curriculum.** The participants shared some of the challenges faced in the school for teaching and recognizing the importance of the *Anishinaabe* language program. As

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mentioned in chapter 1, the emphasis on the English language system within the provincial school curriculum does not provide for Indigenous language programs. The funding from the federal government continues to be inadequate in supporting First Nations to be self-sufficient to maintain their cultural values and languages (First Nations Control of First Nations Education, 2010). The main challenges of the participants were the need for consistent programming from the early years to high school, more class time needed in the schedule, and teacher training programs to certify *Anishinaabe* language teachers. However, with the recent passing of the *Indigenous Language Act* should enable First Nations schools to include this in their curriculum.

**Inconsistency of programming.** In listening to the participants there was clearly frustration in the inadequacies of providing the *Anishinaabe* language program. There was inconsistency of programming due to lack of planning opportunities to provide proper programming from the lower grades to middle grades and high school. The participants all mentioned gaps of providing a consistent year to year *Anishinaabe* language program particularly to the middle years. Another gap that was mentioned was the need for more time for teaching *Anishinaabe* language classes. However, a challenge with more time for each classroom would be difficult with only one language teacher to accommodate all the classrooms, especially in the early years where the teaching requires oral repetition of the *Anishinaabe* language. The one participant stated, “*Ee-yaa oral ka-ikidowaan waynih-a-coh gee-ishko-cgun-da-ga-na*” (when I say oral, I would have such a tired voice). This was brought to the attention of the Education Director who was not able to provide supports in the way of possibly hiring more staff to assist her. Clearly, one can see the frustration especially when the staff consists of many fluent speakers.

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All participants agreed that it would be helpful to have more language sharing, language workshops, and training to strengthen the *Anishinaabe* language program in the school. In the interviews all participants spoke of staff in the school who were fluent language speakers. A challenging factor regarding the fluent speakers was a commitment to promote the *Anishinaabe* language. All participants commented that the fluent speakers need to help by speaking to the students as well as encouraging it through daily activities such as *Anishinaabe* word of the day. It is also mentioned that conversations by the fluent speakers is more in the English language and not the *Anishinaabe* language. How could this be reversed somewhat? The fluent speakers could help the participants by speaking and promoting the *Anishinaabe* language.

When I asked about training programs for more language teachers all three participants agreed that it was needed. One of the participants commented, “I’d be able to train somebody” (line 343, p.16). Another participant commented “hire teacher aides for each class. *Me-inggy-yak da Anishinaabemowat ta weejee-ayat* (those are the ones to speak the *Anishinaabe* language and help)” (line 347 p.17). As mentioned in chapter 4, I believe this is what the Elder gentleman was speaking about when he spoke about the new life under the dead leaves. There are the many opportunities to revitalize the *Anishinaabe* language, it is still there as signified by the participants and the Elder.

**Language program models.** When I asked about the use of different types of language programming models and giving the examples of Immersion, Bilingual, and Language Nests there was no definite answer on the use of anyone of these types of language program models. However, the one that was discussed to be useful was the bilingual model as one of the participants stated, “Bilingual education works better today because most children do not speak or understand the language” (lines 172-173, p.8). There was also no indication that any of the

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three models were used in the school. The Immersion model would involve strictly teaching and learning one language, the Bilingual model would be teaching with two languages used for instruction while the Language Nest model is where young children are exposed to an Indigenous language extensively to create a new generation of fluent speakers with active participation of parents and grandparents in the home.

**School programs.** One of the participants spoke of *Anishinaabe* language evening classes for adults where a language dictionary was created. She goes on to say that numbers slowly dropped and eventually discontinued due to transportation challenges and other costs. Students in the school are offered a cultural program that provides land-based and cultural activities. The cultural program is available to all students but as commented by one of the participants, “I have found that not all students are involved in all language and culture activities” (line 269, p.13). The cultural program is separate from the *Anishinaabe* language program that is taught in the school. One of the participants recalls that the only time they have worked together was to provide a language game where prizes were provided by the cultural program. She stated, “The only time I work with them is *uuh Anishinaabe* bingos *a-twung* (when we put on)” (line 382, p.380). It is recommended that the cultural program go hand in hand with the *Anishinaabe* language program.

**Findings.** Throughout this chapter, I have stated the findings of what my research participants have shared with me. The participants’ stories were real life experiences filled with many teachings, challenges, and revitalization strategies of the *Anishinaabe* language. My findings have been that *Anishinaabe* language loss began with the residential school system for all participants with intergenerational effects contributing to the current state of the *Anishinaabe* language in the school. The English language system embedded in the curriculum also makes it

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challenging to place equal value on the *Anishinaabe* language in the school. Though there were challenges there were also many things in place to retain and revitalize the language such as the fluency of the language that still exists in the school, the ability to have *Anishinaabe* language classes, and staff who believe in the value of the *Anishinaabe* language. The findings are also embedded in the following recommendations that were made by the research participants.

**Teacher recommendations.** The valuable information that was shared by the participants is a testament of all their hard work and how they envision a productive path in moving forward with the revitalization of the *Anishinaabe* language in their school. I have gathered information from the interviews which I would recommend to reduce further language loss and in fact revitalize the language through a direct roadmap gathered from analyzing and coding the participants' responses. The participants specified the need for more time for language classes, to see each class every day. This would be possible with the proper funding in place to employ the proper number of staff needed to provide regularly scheduled daily classes with the required preparation time. It is far too often that language teachers are required to fulfill a timetable based on the curriculum to provide First Nations language programs second to core subjects such as English Language Arts. It is like an afterthought without recognition of its value. Proper scheduling such as providing the language classes everyday would also provide consistent exposure to retain and learn to speak the language. In providing a consistent program there would be more opportunity for repetition of the *Anishinaabe* language resulting in better retention for students to remember the words, the sounds, and meanings.

**High school recommendations.** It was also mentioned that older students get bored due to the amount of writing of the *Anishinaabe* language in the higher grades. It is not known if the students are learning and retaining the *Anishinaabe* language by writing it or whether it makes it

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more difficult to learn as it is an oral language. There needs to be a change in how it is taught to the older students if it is considered boring. One of the participants commented on the need to have more fun activities and projects to engage the students. The projects can tie into another suggestion made in regards to signs in the *Anishinaabe* language throughout the school and community for students to become familiar with reading and retaining the *Anishinaabe* language, another form of repetition.

**Staff recommendations.** There was also a need for all staff both First Nations and non-First Nations to support the *Anishinaabe* language program on a daily basis. An example was the word of the day where an *Anishinaabe* word was broadcast over the Public Announcement (PA) system with the pronunciation reinforced by a language speaker and addressed to all school staff and students. It is a learning opportunity for all staff to learn the *Anishinaabe* word of the day. The importance of the *Anishinaabe* language has to be taught throughout the school for a better understanding on its value to the *Anishinaabek* (people). This would also motivate the staff who are fluent to assist in reinforcing and revitalizing the *Anishinaabe* language. The education on the value of the *Anishinaabe* language and its connection to the culture and Indigenous knowledge has to be promoted and modeled by all fluent language speakers. The culture and Indigenous knowledge is inherent to the *Anishinaabe* language and therefore the fluent language speakers through the *Anishinaabe* language carry that knowledge and culture. When speaking the *Anishinaabe* language it is a natural way of teaching.

**Language teacher training recommendations.** It has been emphasized that Indigenous language speakers are on a decline. So, it is imperative that *Anishinaabe* language teacher training programs are put in place. This can include *Anishinaabe* language workshops that lead into certified training programs. One of the participants mentioned that there are fluent language



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speakers who can be trained to become *Anishinaabe* language teachers. An organization such as the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) can be requested to provide language workshops or training programs in the area of the *Anishinaabe* language. However, direction and consistency would remain at the discretion of the school administration. This could involve the training and establishment of language model programs such as the Immersion, Bilingual or Language Nests. As mentioned, there was no indication on the use of a language model when asked in the interviews with the three participants.

**Curriculum recommendations.** Another area that was discussed was the need to revise the *Anishinaabe* language curriculum with the help of the community, especially the Elders. One of the participants commented that the curriculum was old and had never been revised. A laddering approach was also discussed where the curriculum would follow a theme approach that would start at the early years, carry onto the middle years, and through to high school. This type of approach was discussed but never implemented. I believe this to be an excellent idea that requires the time for follow up on a monthly or quarterly basis between all *Anishinaabe* language teachers in the school. This would ensure review and commitment in curriculum plans in order to provide consistency in the program content and most importantly to follow through with planning. Perhaps there needs to be a graded system in place from early years to middle years to high school. There are many, many ways and so much content that can be taught therefore a consistent curriculum plan is needed to put a constructive and meaningful program in place. This will ensure an established curriculum plan should there be a change in *Anishinaabe* language teacher staffing. The many resources that have been developed and are available can be fully utilized to meet the needs of the curriculum and program plans.

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**Leadership support recommendations.** It was also important for the participants to have the support of the Chief and Council, the Education Director, and Principal to help reinforce the importance of the *Anishinaabe* language. There is a need to reawake the awareness of the value of the language and working together as a community will help promote fluency of the *Anishinaabe* language. The support of leadership would enable more commitment and interest for participation from all ages of community members to be actively involved in activities such as language classes in the evening. Due to the challenges that are sometimes faced in a First Nations community, support services from leadership would enhance promotion for success with such activities (i.e. transportation accommodations).

**Future recommendations.** This research study with a small limited number of participants have brought forward many valuable recommendations. There was no information available, on whether students from all the different grade levels came into the school system speaking, understanding, or not knowing the *Anishinaabe* language. Additional research specific to the Learning Centres such as the day care, nursery program, and further studies of the *Anishinaabe* language in the community school would be valuable in providing more strategies to reach all children young and older in revitalizing the *Anishinaabe* language. The participants reported that the most interested in learning and retaining the *Anishinaabe* language were the Kindergarten students. More emphasis is required to engage middle years and high school learners.

**Strategic plan recommendation.** My final recommendation is the need for a five-year strategic plan to address the revitalization of the *Anishinaabe* language. All Indigenous languages in Canada are in a critical state of being lost as stated by scholars such as Battiste (2013) and Kirkness (2013) and reports such as Statistics Canada (2016). The plan would

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address challenges such as the need for a coordinator with an assistant, and a committee to lead and oversee the process of revitalizing the *Anishinaabe* language to make sure funding is in place. The five-year strategic plan would provide focus to create yearly work plans where budgets for staffing and programming would be key and that people are paid accordingly otherwise there won't be the motivation to become involved. This would also address the teaching staff, where far too often, the First Nations language teachers are not recognized of the immense responsibilities that they undertake to teach the First Nations language. Kirkness (1998) stated it very clearly: "Aboriginal language teachers are not paid on the same salary scale as all teachers though their task is onerous as most teachers. In many instances, they must teach all grades from kindergarten to grade twelve and develop curricula and materials as well" (p.63). It is important to rectify such situations in order for revitalization to succeed.

**Limitations of the study.** The biggest limitation of the study may have been the small number of participants from one school due to limited available research time due to the fact the researcher was working fulltime. Also, the restrictions of the COVID Pandemic created limitations in time spent for research as First Nations were in lockdown with no access allowed to the community. The availability of technology also impacted the study as internet access was extremely limited and only available in central agencies such as the Band Office, Health Centre, and school in the First Nations community. The mental health created by the lockdowns was also a large factor in the mindsets of the participants and phone calls were not a dependable source for the length and confidentiality of the research.

The approach that I used was the qualitative and narrative design "that involves studying a small number of individuals or sites" in Creswell's (2008) table of characteristics (p.516). I did not have the time to do a grounded qualitative study that would involve a larger number of

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participants. Lastly, there are a limited to nil number of academic studies similar to my research though there are many non-academic studies and reports such as Assembly of First Nations, *Towards a New Beginning* (2017). The report was done to gather information about Indigenous languages.

**Conclusion.** I feel I have empowered my participants through the sharing of their stories to create a roadmap for themselves and others to continue to retain and revitalize the *Anishinaabe* language. The participants have contributed by giving insight to others who read this study by providing an understanding of the challenges faced in retaining and revitalizing the *Anishinaabe* language in a predominantly English based education setting in their First Nations school. However, there is a need for someone to lead the process, that person needs to be hired and the sole focus will be on making sure it happens, that the plan is up and running.

The new legislation for Indigenous languages titled, *An Act respecting Indigenous Languages* – short title – *Indigenous Languages Act* was passed in June 2019. The Act gives Indigenous languages legislated government support for legal recognition. In summary the Act stated, “This enactment recognizes the right of the aboriginal peoples of Canada to use, preserve, revitalize and promote their languages, and expresses the Government of Canada’s commitment to preserve, revitalize, and promote aboriginal languages in Canada by protecting them where appropriate” (Parliament of Canada, 2015). In recognizing the Act, the Assembly of First Nations has created a guide titled, *An Act respecting Indigenous Languages: A Tool for First Nations Language Revitalization* (2019-2020). The guide stated, “The act builds on these foundational pieces to ensure support and adequate, sustainable and long-term funding to meet the goal of reclaiming, revitalizing, maintaining, and strengthening First Nations languages” (Assembly of First Nations, 2018). The Act gives hope in saving the Indigenous Languages of

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Canada. The First Nations communities, schools, scholars, and First Nations organizations need to become familiar with this Act and know how to use it to ensure revitalization of the Indigenous languages. There needs to be a strong focus to provide an impetus in making sure that the Act is set in motion.

**Closing Note.** In doing this study, it is certainly not my intention to bring forward feelings of anxiety, bitterness, or frustrations. Some of the information and stories may bring up memories of lived experiences and/or intergenerational effects for individuals, families, and friends. Some people have been affected by such traumas and unjust realities. The participants were strong First Nations women who shared their lived experiences willingly to make us aware that we, as First Nations, are resilient people. As an Indigenist researcher, it is not in my place to advise or make recommendations of how to address the ills that affect us personally from this study. I feel it is up to each individual to decide if there is a need and if necessary to find how it is to be addressed. I feel strongly about the importance of First Nations languages and hope that the realities from this study will help bring to light the struggles and challenges faced by First Nations people in retaining their languages. Further to identifying the difficulties it is imperative that First Nations languages be acknowledged by society as it is what gives identity as a distinct people. Therefore, this study does not come from a negative stance but from an empowering overview on the need to retain and revitalize First Nations languages for the importance they signify in the culture and well-being of First Nations people.

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## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### ENREB approval form

#### RENEWAL APPROVAL

Effective: June 30, 2021

New Expiry: August 6, 2022

Principal Investigator: [REDACTED]  
 Advisor: [REDACTED]  
 Protocol Number: HS23856 (E2020:022)  
 Protocol Title: *An Investigation into the Revitalization of First Nations Languages in Manitoba: Perspectives of First Nations Educators*

[REDACTED], Chair, REB2

**Research Ethics Board 2** has reviewed and renewed the above research. The Human Ethics Office is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans- TCPS 2* (2018).

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

- i. Any changes to this research must be approved by the Human Ethics Office before implementation.
- ii. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be reported to the HEO immediately through an REB Event.
- iii. This renewal is valid for one year only. A Renewal Request must be submitted and approved prior to the above expiry date.
- iv. A Protocol Closure must be submitted to the HEO when the research is complete or if the research is terminated.

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

## Appendix B

## Letters of Permission

## Letter of Permission to Chief and Education Director



University  
of Manitoba

Faculty of Education

230 Education Building  
71 Curry Place  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9001  
Fax (204) 474-7551  
[www.umanitoba.ca/education](http://www.umanitoba.ca/education)

Date

Chief  
Director of Education  
First Nation  
Address

Research Project Title: An Investigation into the Revitalization of First Nations Languages in Manitoba: Perspectives of First Nations Educators

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Dear Chief and Director of Education,

My name is [Redacted], I am currently a student taking my master's in educational administration in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba (U of M). I am working on the completion of my thesis. The title of my thesis is: *An Investigation into the Revitalization of First Nations Languages in Manitoba: Perspectives of First Nations Educators*. I am an *Anishinaabekwe*, fluent in the *Anishinaabe* language, and an advocate for our First Nations languages. I want to empower the *Anishinaabe* peoples in the community to investigate possible reasons of language loss. I would like your permission to do a research study in your community. This would involve your school and in particular, three First Nation educators that speak fluently in the *Anishinaabe* and English languages, have knowledge of *Anishinaabe* language instruction and language pedagogy, and are band members currently employed in their

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

*Anishinaabe* home community school. There is no monetary compensation provided to participants of this study. As an *Anishinaabekwe*, I will follow *Anishinaabe* protocol by offering a small pouch of tobacco with their letter of invitation as well as offering a small gift to each participant to acknowledge the sharing of their knowledge.

The recruitment process will require the assistance of the principal, who I will contact and send a letter to, if permission is granted, informing her/him of my study. She/he will be requested to distribute a letter of invite to potential participants. This will allow the individuals to provide me of their intention or interest of participating in the study. Participation in the study is entirely optional. However, I feel this study is important not only for the three participants but more importantly for the students, staff, and community members in realizing the value of retaining the *Anishinaabe* language.

### **Confidentiality:**

I want to assure you that I will use pseudonyms for the names of the participants and will not name the community or school. Identities will be confidential and, in that way, assure confidentiality of the specific person and place that she/he is employed. The intent of the study is to gather information which will inform about language loss, retention, and revitalization in the community school as told by the participants. These findings will enable further exploration perhaps in order to gain more attention to the retention and revitalization of the *Anishinaabe* language.

### **Risks:**

There are no intended risks to the participants of this study as all information is confidential, viewed only by me as the principal investigator, my university advisor, and a potential assistant to type the transcripts. The assistant will help transcribe the interview but with the use of pseudonyms will not know who has provided the information. There is no more risk to this study than one would normally assume in one's regular life.

### **Summary of Research:**

The research section of my thesis is to explore *Anishinaabemowin* (language) loss from the perspectives of three *Anishinaabe* educators who work in the community school. The current status of our Indigenous languages are considered to be endangered and most may be lost if we do not address this critical state. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the *Anishinaabe* educators' perspectives on the challenges that they may encounter or see in the retention and revitalization of *Anishinaabemowin* when working in a predominantly English based education setting in the community school. It is critical to address language loss and in this case, particular focus on *Anishinaabemowin*, by examining it from the perspectives of three grassroots *Anishinaabe* educators. This study will provide information from the language speakers who know the language first

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

hand and more importantly the study will enable documentation of what they feel will help and can be done in retaining and revitalizing the language.

This study is not intended to criticize how a First Nations school is operated in any manner rather it is intended to help understand the factors of language loss and how the *Anishinaabe* language is regarded within the education system.

I would also like to explore the *Anishinaabe* educators' perspectives in identifying factors that have led to language loss and what can be done about it. Specifically, the study will seek to address the following research question:

1. What are the factors identified by the participants that lead to language loss in a First Nations school and what can they do to reverse the trend of language loss?

The research question has been developed for purposes of investigating factors of language loss, the sharing of experiences and stories which may reveal more ways and ideas of how to promote First Nations language use as well as uncover barriers that may need to be addressed.

The protocol for this letter requesting permission to conduct research will also be examined and approved by the U of M Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). A letter of invitation to the participants, a letter for consent from the participants, and a letter to the principal will also be sanctioned by the ENREB pending your approval to allow me to do this research. All letters are available upon request.

### **Methodology:**

The time required to conduct an individual interview, which may include on-line options, with each participant will be approximately one hour. Once the first interview is transcribed, I will send the transcription to the participant for review. The participant may make changes (additions, deletions, revisions) and send the edited transcription back to me. If needed, a follow-up meeting for further clarification may be conducted through a second visit. Once the research study is completed, all participants will receive a copy of the findings of the study. I hope to conduct the interviews during the month of September 2020. I will arrange an interview with the participants at a location that is mutually agreeable, in order to ensure that you are comfortable and to protect the privacy of our conversation. I have developed a list of questions to align with the research question stated in the Summary of Research section. The questions are developed to guide the interview for purposes of collecting the required data for the research question. You may contact me if you wish to see the questions.

Once the interviews are transcribed, the data gathered will be analyzed by me as the researcher. I will have an assistant who will help by transcribing the raw transcripts of the interviews. The assistant will sign an oath of confidentiality to protect the confidentiality of the participants.



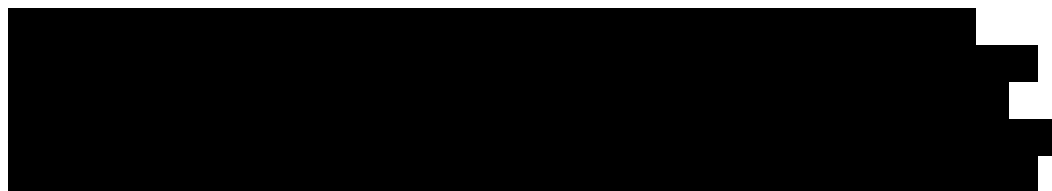
## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

The confidential transcripts from the interviews will then be sent back to the participants to ensure they are transcribed accurately and that the transcripts have captured what the participants have voiced. After the data has been member checked and analyzed I will report my findings including recommendations. I will then successfully present and defend the completed thesis, which will be available online at the U of M libraries where it can be viewed by whoever seeks such information contained therein.

All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet behind my locked office door. All information will be transcribed on a password protected computer through a secure network (as required by the University of Manitoba guidelines), and will not allow for the identification of any individual. My faculty advisor and I will be the persons who will have access to the data. However, the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the Research Quality Management/Assurance Office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. The electronic data will be deleted or destroyed and the hard data will be shredded within one year after the completion of my thesis.

**Dissemination of Results:**

By way of this letter of agreement and in following the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) and as an *Anishinaabe* researcher, I recognize and respect these standards. I will present the information by dissemination in language, education, Indigenous conferences, and publications due to the lack of information on First Nation language loss, especially from a grassroots perspective. This information will benefit other First Nations as well as strengthening and empowering First Nations to retain and revitalize their languages.



I would like to thank you for your support and consideration of this request. I also want to inform you that I have been a long-time educator in First Nations schools and currently work for a First Nations organization that assists First Nations schools. The data analysis from this research will only serve to enhance our First Nations languages.

I look forward to your response. I will be available personally to collect this letter requesting permission to conduct research from your office. Your permission will allow me to begin my recruitment of participants from your school to commence my research.

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

Meegwetch,



---

PLEASE ADD SIGNATURE

We, the Chief and Education Director, have read this letter requesting permission to conduct research and give consent for the research being conducted by Adeline Mercredi, University of Manitoba.

Chief's name (please print)

Chief 's Signature

Education Director's name (please print)

Date  
Education Director's  
Signature

Researcher's name (please print)

Date  
  
Researcher's  
Signature  
  
Date

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

## Letter to the Principal



University  
of Manitoba

Faculty of Education

230 Education Building  
71 Curry Place  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9001  
Fax (204) 474-7551  
[www.umanitoba.ca/education](http://www.umanitoba.ca/education)

Date

Principal  
First Nation  
Address

Research Project Title: An Investigation into the Revitalization of First Nations  
Languages in Manitoba: Perspectives of First Nations Educators

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Principal,

My name is [REDACTED], I am currently a student taking my master's in educational administration in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba (U of M). I am working on the completion of my thesis. The title of my thesis is: *An Investigation into the Revitalization of First Nations Languages in Manitoba: Perspectives of First Nations Educators*. I am an *Anishinaabekwe*, fluent in the *Anishinaabe* language, and an advocate for our First Nations languages. I want to empower the *Anishinaabe* peoples in the community to investigate possible reasons of language loss. I have permission from the Chief and Education Director to do a research study in the school. For this study, I will be recruiting three First Nation educators who speak *Anishinaabemowin* and English and are band members who teach in the school. Participation in the study is entirely optional. I feel this study is important not only for the three participants but more importantly for the students, staff, and community members in realizing the value of retaining the *Anishinaabe* language.

I want to assure you that this study is not intended to criticize how a First Nations school is operated in any manner rather it is intended to help understand the factors of language loss and how the *Anishinaabe* language is regarded within the education system.

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

### **Confidentiality:**

I will use pseudonyms for the names of the participants and will not name the community or school. Identities will be confidential and, in that way, assure confidentiality of the specific person and place that he/she is employed. The intent of the study is to gather information which will inform about language loss, retention, and revitalization in the community school as told by the participants. These findings will enable further exploration perhaps in order to guarantee more attention to the retention and revitalization of the *Anishinaabe* language.

### **Summary of Research:**

The research section of my thesis is to explore *Anishinaabemowin* (language) loss from the perspectives of three *Anishinaabe* educators who work in the community school. The current status of our Indigenous languages are considered to be endangered and most may be lost if we do not address this critical state. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the *Anishinaabe* educators' perspectives on the challenges that they may encounter or see in the retention and revitalization of *Anishinaabemowin* when working in a predominantly English based education setting in the community school. It is critical to address language loss and in this case, particular focus on *Anishinaabemowin*, by examining it from the perspectives of three grassroots *Anishinaabe* educators. This study will provide information from the language speakers who know the language first hand and more importantly the study will enable documentation of what they feel will help and can be done in retaining and revitalizing the language.

I would also like to explore the *Anishinaabe* educators' perspectives in identifying factors that have led to language loss and what can be done about it. Specifically, the study will seek to address the following research question:

1. What are the factors identified by the participants that lead to language loss in a First Nations school and what can they do to reverse the trend of language loss?

The research question has been developed for purposes of investigating factors of language loss, the sharing of experiences and stories which may reveal more ways and ideas of how to promote First Nations language use as well as uncover barriers that may need to be addressed.

The protocol for this letter is approved by the U of M Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). A letter of invitation and a letter for consent for the participants is also sanctioned by the ENREB.

### **Methodology:**

The time required to conduct an individual interview, which may include on-line options, with each participant will be approximately one hour. Once the first interview is transcribed, I will send the transcription to the participant for review. The participant may make changes (additions, deletions, revisions) and send the

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

edited transcription back to me. If needed, a follow-up meeting for further clarification may be conducted through a second visit. Once the research study is completed, all participants will receive a copy of the findings of the study. I hope to conduct the interviews during the month of September 2020. I will arrange an interview with the participants at a location that is mutually agreeable, in order to ensure that you are comfortable and to protect the privacy of our conversation. I have developed a list of questions to align with the research question stated in the Summary of Research section. The questions are developed to guide the interview for purposes of collecting the required data for the research question. You may contact me if you wish to see the questions.

Once the interviews are transcribed, the data gathered will be analyzed by me as the researcher. I will have an assistant who will help by transcribing the raw transcripts of the interviews. The assistant will sign an oath of confidentiality to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

The confidential transcripts from the interviews will then be sent back to the participants to ensure they are transcribed accurately and that the transcripts have captured what the participants have voiced. After the data has been member checked and analyzed I will report my findings including recommendations. I will then successfully present and defend the completed thesis, which will be available online at the U of M libraries where it can be viewed by whoever seeks such information contained therein.

All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet behind my locked office door. All information will be transcribed on a password protected computer through a secure network (as required by the University of Manitoba guidelines), and will not allow for the identification of any individual. My faculty advisor and I will be the persons who will have access to the data. However, the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the Research Quality Management/Assurance Office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. The electronic data will be deleted or destroyed and the hard data will be shredded within one year after the completion of my thesis.

### **Dissemination of Results:**

By way of this letter of agreement and in following the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) and as an *Anishinaabe* researcher, I recognize and respect these standards. I will present the information by dissemination in language, education, or Indigenous conferences, and publications due to the lack of information on First Nation language loss, especially from a grassroots perspective. This information will benefit other First Nations as well as strengthening and empowering First Nations to retain and revitalize their languages.

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this study you may contact

[REDACTED]

By way of this letter, I am requesting that you distribute the letter of participation to all teaching staff who meet the criteria of being First Nation educators, who speak both *Anishinaabemowin* and English, and are band members who teach in the school.

I would like to thank you for your support. I also want to inform you that I have been a long-time educator in First Nations schools and currently work for a First Nations organization that assists First Nations schools. The data analysis from this research will only serve to enhance our First Nations languages.

I look forward to the school visit.

Meegwetch,

[REDACTED]

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

## Invitation Letter to participants



University  
of Manitoba

Faculty of Education

230 Education Building  
71 Curry Place  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9001  
Fax (204) 474-7551  
[www.umanitoba.ca/education](http://www.umanitoba.ca/education)

Date

Research Project Title: An Investigation into the Revitalization of First Nations Languages in Manitoba: Perspectives of First Nations Educators

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Participant:

My name is [REDACTED], I am currently a student taking my master's in educational administration in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba (U of M). I am working on the completion of my thesis. The title of my thesis is: *An Investigation into the Revitalization of First Nations Languages in Manitoba: Perspectives of First Nations Educators*. I am an *Anishinaabekwe* who is fluent in the *Anishinaabe* language and an advocate for our First Nations languages. I want to empower the *Anishinaabe* peoples in the community about our language. I am requesting your participation to engage in this study by inviting you as my *Neechi Anishinaabe* of your school to participate in this research study. The invitation is entirely optional and is on a volunteer basis. There is no monetary compensation provided to participants of this study. As an *Anishinaabekwe* following *Anishinaabe* protocol, I have provided an offering of a small pouch of tobacco with this letter of invitation and will be providing a small gift to all participants to acknowledge the sharing of their knowledge. I feel this study is important not only for you as a participant but for the students, staff, and community members as well in helping to realize the value of retaining the *Anishinaabe* language.

This letter will provide you the basic idea of what this research is about and what participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

### **Confidentiality:**

Your name and any identifying information will not appear in the results; you will be provided with a pseudonym to protect your identity. All of the findings will be written up as general themes that come out of the entire interview, supporting comments from other participants might be used to add impact to the findings. In this case, should any comments suggest the identity of a person or school, the data will not be used in the results or the discussion of the study. Should you speak about any other individuals who are not part of this study, any identifiers would be taken out of the commentary if that would offer confidentiality and/or the comment would not be used in the results or discussion of the study.

Please be advised that even with all the efforts made to protect confidentiality, and given the size of many First Nation communities, there is still a small risk of someone identifying your involvement as a participant of this study.

Confidentiality will be protected by the use of non-identifiable coding and pseudonyms for the final presentation of the findings of the study. You may ask me as the principle investigator for further clarification of any concerns of confidentiality for this study.

Please also be advised that there is a possibility that the abuse of children may be discovered during this study. As the PI, I have a legal obligation under *The Child and Family Services Act* to report information that may lead me to believe that a child is or might be in need of protection. Should a report of abuse occur, the PI will as soon as possible contact Child and Family Services (CFS) and/or the Designated Intake Agency (DIA) and give a detailed report. The detailed report will have the information given to me, I will not probe or try to investigate for further information. Once reported, I will leave the case with CFS or DIA as my responsibility to report will be fulfilled as stated in the CFS Act.

### **Risks:**

There are no intended risks to the participants of this study as all information is confidential, viewed only by me as the principal investigator, my university advisor, and a potential assistant to type the transcripts. The assistant will help transcribe the interview but with the use of pseudonyms will not know who has provided the information. There is no more risk to this study than one would normally assume in one's regular life.

### **Summary of Research:**

The research section of my thesis is to explore *Anishinaabemowin* (language) loss from your perspectives as an *Anishinaabe* educator working in the community school. The current status of our Indigenous languages are considered to be endangered and most may be lost if we do not address this critical state. The primary purpose of this study is to examine your perspectives on the challenges that you may encounter or see in the retention and revitalization of *Anishinaabemowin* when working in a predominantly English based education setting in the community school. It is critical to address language loss and in this case, particular focus on *Anishinaabemowin*, by examining it from your perspective as a grassroots *Anishinaabe* educator. This study will provide



## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

information from a language speaker who is fluent and more importantly provide information you feel will help and can be recommended in retaining and revitalizing the language.

This study is not intended to criticize how a First Nations school is operated in any manner rather it is intended to help understand the factors of language loss and how the *Anishinaabe* language is regarded within the education system. The Chief and Education Director have given permission to conduct this research. I would also like to explore your perspectives in identifying factors that have led to language loss and what can be done about it. Specifically, the study will seek to address the following research question:

1. What are the factors identified by the participants that lead to language loss in a First Nations school and what can they do to reverse the trend of language loss?

The research question has been developed for purposes of investigating factors of language loss, the sharing of experiences and stories which may reveal more ways and ideas of how to promote First Nations language use as well as uncover barriers that may need to be addressed.

### **Methodology:**

To complete this study, I am inviting you to participate in an individual interview, which may include online options, and should take no more than one hour of your time. The questions I will ask will relate to language loss, retention, and revitalization. Of course, you have the right to answer only those questions you feel most comfortable answering, and you can withdraw from the study at any time before the data is completely aggregated by contacting me at the information listed on this form; should you choose to withdraw before aggregation, your data comments will be destroyed.

If you agree to participate in this study, we will arrange an interview at a location that is mutually agreeable, in order to ensure that you are comfortable and to protect the privacy of our conversation. If you agree to be in the study you will receive a copy of the interview questions before the interview so that you can gather your thoughts. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Only my faculty advisor and I along with my assistant who will do the transcribing will have access to the data. The interview will be digitally recorded. I have developed a list of questions to align with the research question stated in the Summary of Research section. The questions are developed to guide the interview for purposes of collecting the required data for the research question. It is important to note that written responses are not required nor expected. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers, your answers will be based on your experience.

Once the interviews are transcribed, the data gathered will be analyzed by me as the researcher. As stated earlier, I will have an assistant who will help by transcribing the raw transcripts of the interviews. The assistant will sign an oath of confidentiality to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The confidential transcripts will then be returned to ensure they are transcribed accurately and that the transcripts have captured what has been voiced. Any changes (additions,

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

deletions, revisions) for the transcript will be sent back to me. If needed, a follow-up meeting for further clarification may be conducted through a second visit. Once the research study is completed, all participants will receive a copy of the findings of the study.

All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet behind my locked office door. All information will be transcribed on a password protected computer through a secure network (as required by the University of Manitoba guidelines), and will not allow for the identification of any individual. My faculty advisor and I will be the persons who will have access to the data. However, the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the Research Quality Management/Assurance Office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. The electronic data will be deleted or destroyed and the hard data will be shredded within one year after the completion of my thesis.

Once the data has been transcribed and analyzed and I have reported my findings, included recommendations, have successfully presented and defended the completed thesis, it is U of M procedure to have the theses available online at the U of M libraries where they can be viewed by whoever seeks such information contained therein.

**Dissemination of Results:**

In following the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) and as an *Anishinaabe* researcher, I recognize and respect these standards. At the end of the process, you will be able to access a copy of the final report. I will be presenting the information by dissemination in language, education, Indigenous conferences, and publications due to the lack of information on First Nation language loss, especially from a grassroots perspective. This information will benefit other First Nations as well as strengthening and empowering First Nations to retain and revitalize their languages.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this study you may contact

[REDACTED]

Once again, your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, please discard this information.

I look forward to your response.

Meegwetch,

[REDACTED]

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

## Letter of consent to participant



University  
of Manitoba

Faculty of Education

230 Education Building  
71 Curry Place  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9001  
Fax (204) 474-7551  
[www.umanitoba.ca/education](http://www.umanitoba.ca/education)

Date

Research Project Title: An Investigation into the Revitalization of First Nations Languages in Manitoba: Perspectives of First Nations Educators

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Participant:

My name is [REDACTED], I am currently a student taking my master's in educational administration in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba (U of M). I am working on the completion of my thesis. The title of my thesis is: *An Investigation into the Revitalization of First Nations Languages in Manitoba: Perspectives of First Nations Educators*. I am an *Anishinaabekwe* who is fluent in the *Anishinaabe* language and an advocate for our First Nations languages. I want to empower the *Anishinaabe* peoples in the community about our language. I am requesting your participation to engage in this study by inviting you as my *Neechi Anishinaabe* of your school to participate in this research study. The invitation is entirely optional and is on a volunteer basis. There is no monetary compensation provided to participants of this study. As an *Anishinaabekwe* following *Anishinaabe* protocol, I provided an offering of a small pouch of tobacco with your letter of invitation and will be offering a small gift to all participants to acknowledge the sharing of their knowledge. I feel this study is important not only for you as a participant but for the students, staff, and community members as well in helping to realize the value of retaining the *Anishinaabe* language.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

### **Confidentiality:**

Your name and any identifying information will not appear in the results; you will be provided with a pseudonym to protect your identity. All of the findings will be written up as general themes that come out of the entire interview, supporting comments from other participants might be used to add impact to the findings. In this case, should any comments suggest the identity of a person or school, the data will not be used in the results or the discussion of the study. Should you speak about any other individuals who are not part of this study, any identifiers would be taken out of the commentary if that would offer confidentiality and/or the comment would not be used in the results or discussion of the study.

Please be advised that even with all the efforts made to protect confidentiality, and given the size of many First Nation communities, there is still a small risk of someone identifying your involvement as a participant of this study.

Confidentiality will be protected by the use of non-identifiable coding and pseudonyms for the final presentation of the findings of the study. You may ask me as the principle investigator for further clarification of any concerns of confidentiality for this study.

Please also be advised that there is a possibility that the abuse of children may be discovered during this study. As the PI, I have a legal obligation under *The Child and Family Services Act* to report information that may lead me to believe that a child is or might be in need of protection. Should a report of abuse occur, the PI will as soon as possible contact Child and Family Services (CFS) and/or the Designated Intake Agency (DIA) and give a detailed report. The detailed report will have the information given to me, I will not probe or try to investigate for further information. Once reported, I will leave the case with CFS or DIA as my responsibility to report will be fulfilled as stated in the CFS Act.

### **Risks:**

There are no intended risks to the participants of this study as all information is confidential, viewed only by me as the principal investigator, my university advisor, and a potential assistant to type the transcripts. The assistant will help transcribe the interview but with the use of pseudonyms will not know who has provided the information. There is no more risk to this study than one would normally assume in one's regular life.

### **Summary of Research:**

The research section of my thesis is to explore *Anishinaabemowin* (language) loss from your perspectives as an *Anishinaabe* educator working in the community school. The current status of our Indigenous languages are considered to be endangered and most may be lost if we do not address this critical state. The primary purpose of this study is to examine your perspectives on the challenges that you may encounter or see in the retention and revitalization of *Anishinaabemowin* when working in a predominantly English based education

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

setting in the community school. It is critical to address language loss and in this case, particular focus on *Anishinaabemowin*, by examining it from your perspective as a grassroots *Anishinaabe* educator. This study will provide information from a language speaker who is fluent and more importantly provide information you feel will help and can be recommended in retaining and revitalizing the language.

I would also like to explore your perspectives in identifying factors that have led to language loss and what can be done about it. Specifically, the study will seek to address the following research question:

1. What are the factors identified by the participants that lead to language loss in a First Nations school and what can they do to reverse the trend of language loss?

The research question has been developed for purposes of investigating factors of language loss, the sharing of experiences and stories which may reveal more ways and ideas of how to promote First Nations language use as well as uncover barriers that may need to be addressed.

This study is not intended to criticize how a First Nation school is operated in any manner rather it is intended to help understand the factors of language loss and how the *Anishinaabe* language is regarded within the education system. The Chief and Education Director have given permission to conduct this research.

### **Methodology:**

To complete this study, I am inviting you to participate in an individual interview, which may include online options, and should take no more than one hour of your time. The questions I will ask will relate to language loss, retention, and revitalization. Of course, you have the right to answer only those questions you feel most comfortable answering, and you can withdraw from the study at any time before the data is completely aggregated by contacting me at the information listed on this form; should you choose to withdraw before aggregation, your data comments will be destroyed. Expected date for completing aggregation of data and withdrawal deadline for participants is November 2020.

If you agree to participate in this study, we will arrange an interview that is mutually agreeable, in order to ensure that you are comfortable and to protect the privacy of our conversation. If you agree to be in the study you will receive a copy of the interview questions before the interview so that you can gather your thoughts. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Only my faculty advisor and I along with my assistant who will do the transcribing will have access to the data. The interview will be digitally recorded. I have developed a list of questions to align with the research question stated in the Summary of Research section. The questions are developed to guide the interview for purposes of collecting the required data for the research question. It is important to note that written responses are not required nor expected. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers, your answers will be based on your experience.

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

Once the interviews are transcribed, the data gathered will be analyzed by me as the researcher. As stated earlier, I will have an assistant who will help by transcribing the raw transcripts of the interviews. The assistant will sign an oath of confidentiality to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The confidential transcripts will then be returned to ensure they are transcribed accurately and that the transcripts have captured what has been voiced. You may make changes (additions, deletions, revisions) and send the edited transcription back to me. If needed, a follow-up meeting for further clarification may be conducted through a second visit. Once the research study is completed, all participants will receive a copy of the findings of the study.

All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet behind my locked office door. All information will be transcribed on a password protected computer through a secure network (as required by the University of Manitoba guidelines), and will not allow for the identification of any individual. My faculty advisor and I will be the persons who will have access to the data. However, the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the Research Quality Management/Assurance Office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. The electronic data will be deleted or destroyed and the hard data will be shredded within one year after the completion of my thesis.

Once the data has been transcribed and analyzed and I have reported my findings, included recommendations, have successfully presented and defended the completed thesis, it is U of M procedure to have the theses available online at the U of M libraries where they can be viewed by whoever seeks such information contained therein.

**Dissemination of Results:**

In following the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) and as an *Anishinaabe* researcher, I recognize and respect these standards. At the end of the process, you will be able to access a copy of the final report by email or hard copy from the researcher. I will be presenting the information by dissemination in language, education, Indigenous conferences, and publications due to the lack of information on First Nation language loss, especially from a grassroots perspective. This information will benefit other First Nations as well as strengthening and empowering First Nations to retain and revitalize their languages.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You may also refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this study you may contact

[REDACTED]

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I look forward to your response. I will be available personally to collect this consent form. Once I have your signature of approval we can begin the interview process.

Meegwetch,

[REDACTED]

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

## Appendix C

## Interview questions

**(Note: Questions will be refined based upon answers for more depth, if required)**

The following open-ended questions will be asked to find out more about the language loss of the *Anishinaabe* language through the perspectives of three First Nations school Educators.

Tell participants, as they relate to the questions being asked that they keep in mind, “How is this decreasing or increasing the retention (oral fluency) and revitalization of the *Anishinaabe* language?”

*I-ee ji-nah-ga-dand-ji-ga-dek apii ka-kwa-dang onowen oszii-bee-i-gun-nun koo-na-ga  
wejii-asa-mu-gut ji-gi-kan-dumung aneen ji-iszhi Anishinaabemowang shiko aneen  
ji-iszhi ka-nan-da-mang i-keegedowin-in-naan.*

1. Please tell me about yourself, where you're from, how you came to be in the field of education?
2. Please tell me about the school in which you work?
3. As a school teacher who speaks the *Anishinaabe* language, how has the school system in your community affected the *Anishinaabe* language?
4. Do the students in your school speak the *Anishinaabe* language? In what areas do you notice it, in the primary, middle or senior years?
5. How much do you as a teacher use *Anishinaabemowin* inside and outside of school? For example, do you use *Anishinaabemowin* the minute you enter your classroom? How about your students?
6. What factors influenced language loss, retention or revitalization of the *Anishinaabe* language?



## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

Prompts: - residential schools, lack of funding, lack of trained teachers, lack of people who are fluent in the language, influence of eurocentric school system, pressure of using English

7. When *Anishinaabe* language is taught as a subject do you feel the students pick up the language?

8. What would be the best way your school could revitalize the language?

Prompts: - Bilingual education  
- Immersion programs  
- Language nests

9. What do you believe are ways in which language loss may be addressed?

Prompts: - curriculum  
- support of community members  
- role of community leadership  
- teacher training programs to revitalize language  
- development of resources or creative programs  
- local resources  
- land-based teachings/activities, storytelling, medicine picking, language camps.

10. If you woke up tomorrow and the perfect system was in place to help students learn their language what would it look like?

Prompts - Everything is available, no boundaries, no funding barriers

11. Is there anything else that you feel you would like to share on language loss, revitalization or retention?

# LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

## Appendix D

### Coding and Analysis

Data analysis – Coding – Liza

1. Job offer stuck with it – line 45, p.3
2. language loss to occur in 10 years – lines 50-51 p.3
3. Disputed thought of language loss – lines 54-55 p.3
4. Only English speakers were non-Indigenous teachers (conversation) - lines 55-57 p.3
5. Towns, rivers were named in the language – lines 59, 60, p.3
6. Left community and noticed language loss on return – lines 68, 69, p. 4
7. Oral language not written – lines 72-73, p. 4
8. Not given Nursery to teach – line 75, p.4
9. Needs to be oral not written for Kindergarten – line 76, p.4
10. Repetition of language – line 78, p. 4
11. Half hour classes 6-day cycle – line 82, p. 5
12. Kindergarten are foundation enjoy, learn, retain – line 85, p.5
13. Had to advocate for more time with Kindergarten – lines 86-87 p.5
14. Requested helper to assist due to voice hoarseness of teaching oral language - lines 88-89 p.5
15. Helper denied by non-Indigenous teacher – lines 94-95 p.5
16. Met with school administration recommendations never implemented – lines 96-97 p.5
17. One family of three speak fluently in her class but not publicly – lines 103-104 p.6
18. Life skills class tried to speak and could write the language – lines 111-112 p. 6
19. Writing and speaking the language are totally different – line 115 p.6
20. Kindergarten cannot write the language it has to be oral – lines 119-120 p.6
21. Using double vowel writing system for the language – line 122 p.7
22. Write the language how it sounds using English Roman orthography - line 129 p.7
23. Difficulty of pronunciation due to different sounds of language – line 131 p.7
24. Classroom is stationary – line 139 p.7
25. Students use greetings that are taught outside of school - line 145 p.8
26. Does not know what is taught grades four and up – line 148 p.8
27. Uses themes to teach – line 149 p.8
28. Writes all words she knows in the language – lines 150-151 p.8
29. Met with language teacher colleagues and agreed to work together - lines 157-158 p.8
30. MFNERC language facilitator came with different plan but only came once - lines 158-161 p.8
31. Plan for continuum of curriculum with language teachers never happened - line 165-166 p.9
32. Most and foremost factor of language loss was residential school – line 173 p.9
33. Beaten or mouth washed out – lines 175-176 p.9

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

34. Token system to report speaking in the language for a small reward – lines 180-182 p.9
35. Afraid of punishment for speaking the language – line 187 p.10
36. Retention – everyone in the home and community spoke the language – lines 192-193
37. Storytelling – learning new and proper use of words – lines 193-194 p.10
38. Her father and home neighborhood never spoke English – lines 220-221 p. 11
39. Revitalization– Chief and Council must help, listen, and know the importance of the language - lines 225-228 p.12
40. Day Care staff to speak and push the language with the children – line 231 p.12
41. Nursery to be allowed to be taught the language – line 232 p.12
42. Teachers who are speakers to help and speak in the language to children – line 234 p.12
43. The Director needs to help – lines 236-237 p.12
44. Language speakers are on a decline – line 238 p.12
45. We are on the verge of losing it – line 239 p.12
46. Wonder if they are told at home that the language doesn't matter – line 244 p.12
47. Some children think the language is "French" – line 246 p.12
48. Tell them the language is our language – line 247 p.13
49. White man took away many things like hunting and even our language – lines 249-251 p.13
50. Our language is valuable – lines 251 -252 p.13
51. Our words in the language mean what it is we are talking about – lines 253-254 p.13
52. White man words come from an alphabet system – lines 254-255 p.13
53. Fear that we won't have the language for long – lines 266-267 p.13
54. It has to be pushed hard to survive – line 269 p.14
55. Like having the language being taught as a subject – line 274 p.14
56. Would like to teach children everyday - line 277 p.14
57. Six Day cycle/schedule is not consistent enough – lines 279 p.14
58. Had a helper for a while – lines 286-287 p. 14
59. Helper taught afternoon classes under her supervision – lines 290-291 p.15
60. Helper helped with props and posters – lines 297-298 p.15
61. Language speakers converse in English – lines 307-308 p.15
62. Know the meaning of the word but cannot enunciate it – line 315 p.16
63. Movement of the tongue is different for our language from English – lines 318-319 p.16
64. Similar pronunciations with slightly different sound of the word – lines 322-323 p.16
65. Progression of language from grade to grade not happening – line 333 p.17
66. Teacher training programs for revitalizing the language would work – line 344 p. 17
67. Teacher aides for each class to help teach the language – line 347
68. Back in the day all primary teachers spoke only *Anishinaabemowin* – lines 350-353 p.17

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

- 69. Speaking on the local radio station using the language – line 360 p. 18
- 70. Encouraged DJ to continue program – line 364 p.18
- 71. Language session did not continue – line 366 p.18
- 72. Received many compliments on the program – line 369 p.18
- 73. Need communication with culture group – line 380 p. 19
- 74. Not connecting with the different programs in the school - line 389-390 p.19
- 75. Importance of speaking the language for job opportunity – line 396 p.20
- 76. Not knowing importance of keeping the language – line 410 p.20
- 77. Mother told her to teach her family the language – line 411-412 p.20
- 78. Important to know the language for giftedness in the culture – lines 413-414 p.21

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

### Data analysis – Coding – Agnes

1. Influence of residential school – line 31 p.2
2. Punishment if you spoke the language – lines 36-38 p.2
3. Could not speak English – lines 40-41 p.2
4. Did not speak much– line 42p.2
5. Saw children being beaten when speaking the language – lines 45-48 p.2
6. Forced to learn to speak English – line 54 p.2
7. Language was strong at home – lines 56-58 p.3
8. First Nation children struggling to learn in the school system–lines 62-64p.3
9. Children embarrassed to speak the language – line 73 p.3
10. Children speak language when encouraged but speak mostly English – lines 77-79 p.3
11. Encourage cultural workers to speak the language in the classrooms – lines 83-84 p. 4
12. Role model to speak the language – line 88 p.4
13. Fluent language speakers do not teach, speak, promote the language to children - lines 101-106 p.4
14. No noticeable change in use of the language – line 112 p.5
15. Director needs to encourage all staff to promote the language – lines 112-113 p.5
16. Non-native staff more interest than native staff – line 117 p.5
17. All staff have to help – line 124 p.5
18. No funds to pay language teachers properly – line 135 p.5
19. Kids learned and spoke the language with language teachers–lines 144-145 p.6
20. No funding, no language teachers – line 147 p.6
21. Bilingual program would work to revitalize the language – line 155 p.6
22. Unsure if Nursery or Kindergarten know language – line 169-171 p. 7
23. Lots of development and available resources – lines 178-179 p.7
24. Chief and Council speak and promote the language - line 185 p.7
25. Language to be written on things throughout school/community – lines 194-198 p.8
26. Kids need to see the language to use it – line 202 p.8
27. Evaluation in 1990 government took out language and native studies – line 210 p.8
28. Language was lost when classes stopped – line 218 p.8
29. Kids are embarrassed, ashamed to speak due to negative association – lines 222-226 p.9
30. Native studies class was taught by a specific teacher – line 231 p. 9
31. The classroom teachers helped each other and taught the language – line 232 p.9
32. Government wants to make you a white person – lines 243-244 p.9
33. Didn't teach own children language due to labelling resource – lines 251-253 p.10

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

### Data analysis – Coding – Rochelle

1. Many language speakers in the school – line 31 p.2
2. Not all children speak the language – line 39 p.2
3. Children Embarrassed, scared to speak and most understand fluently – lines 39-41 p.2
4. Community advanced in language compared to other communities – lines 45-46 p.2
5. Some schools don't take language and culture seriously – lines 49 p.3
6. No language classes when she went to school – line 63 p.3
7. Language retained if parents spoke it – line lines 67-68 p.3
8. Spoke a lot of English and many lost the language – lines 66-67 p.3
9. Parents fifty plus have retained the language – line 70 p.4
10. Many are wanting to learn the language – lines 73-74 p.4
11. Early years retain and learn the language – line 78 p.4
12. Other grades not consistent – line 86 p.4
13. Gap in language retention – line 90 p.4
14. Mostly younger grade retains it – line 88 p.4
15. Minority of students speak the language – line 93 p.5
16. Young parents do not speak the language – line 94 p.5
17. Use language 50% because some students don't understand – line 100 p.5
18. Teach bilingually – line 104 p.5
19. Speak and use language as much as possible – line 106 p.5
20. Has to be repetitive – line 111 p.5
21. Unable to speak English when she started school – line 131 p.6
22. Had bathroom accidents because she couldn't speak English – line 133 p.6
23. Retained language because parents spoke the language – line 138 p.7
24. Aunts who moved away lost the language but remember some – line 151 p.7
25. Hardly anyone under thirty speaking the language – line 168 p.8
26. Training of language teachers to have certificates – line 166 p.8
27. Pressure to use English – line 171 p.8
28. Children ridiculed for speaking – line 173 p.8
29. Teaching her grandchildren to speak the language – line 164 p.8
30. The younger ones maybe they will teach the language – line 182 p.9
31. Residential and Day schools influenced language loss – line 188-190 p.9
32. Racism is a factor for language loss – lines 183-184 p.9
33. Lack of funding for language and culture programs – lines 185-186 p.9
34. Getting hard to find language teachers – line 187 p.9
35. Bilingual program works better – line 187 p.9
36. Class time not adequate – line 217 p.10
37. Need to teach the language consistently, everyday – line 215 p.10
38. Encourage other teachers to speak it – line 223 p.10
39. Classroom language teachers for Early years never started – line p.11

## LOSS AND REVITALIZATION OF FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES IN MANITOBA

40. Bilingual program should be taught daily – line 232 p.11
41. Ojibway activities on community radio station – lines 235-236 p.11
42. School cultural program doing activities to revitalize the language – lines 236-237 p.11
43. Developed language booklets with adult evening class – lines 251-253 p.12
44. Need for activities, games, snacks to capture interest – lines 265-266 p.13
45. Recommends immersion as a step up from bilingual program – lines 272 p.13
46. Immersion would be difficult – line 276 p.13
47. Need more language speakers - line 287 p.14
48. Not much interest from older grades – line 292 p.14
49. Need more land-based teachings and activities – line 296 p.14
50. All students need to participate – line 298 p.14
51. Too much writing for older students, find it boring – line 313 p.15
52. Need to make it fun – line 315 p.15
53. Need language workshops for staff – line 319 p.15
54. Use of technology, social media, language camps needed – lines 321-322 p.16
55. Curriculum has to be updated, involve community and Elders – lines 327-330 p.16
56. Leadership supportive, Chief is fluent speaker – line 336-337 p.16
57. Chief models language – line 345 p.17
58. The more people involved the better – line 356 p.17
59. Involvement of Chief, Council and Administration will be helpful – 359 p.17
60. Training should be in community or close by – line 366 p.18
61. Many Teacher Assistants speak the language, can teach the language in the future - line 368 p.18
62. Training strategies – lines 373-375 p.18
63. Willing to train language teachers – lines 378 p.18
64. Train more teachers – line 383 p.19
65. Need own building – line 386 p.19
66. Need for consistency – line 388 p.19
67. Seen as special needs for not speaking English - line 404 p.19
68. Forced to speak English – line 407 p.20
69. Fear of being ostracized if speaking the language – line 409 p.20
70. Need to promote language with every child – line 414 p.20