

HAA DACHXÁNX'I SÁANI KAGÉIYI YÍS:  
HAA YOO X'ATÁNGI KEI NALTSEEN

FOR OUR LITTLE GRANDCHILDREN:  
LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION AMONG THE TLINGIT

by

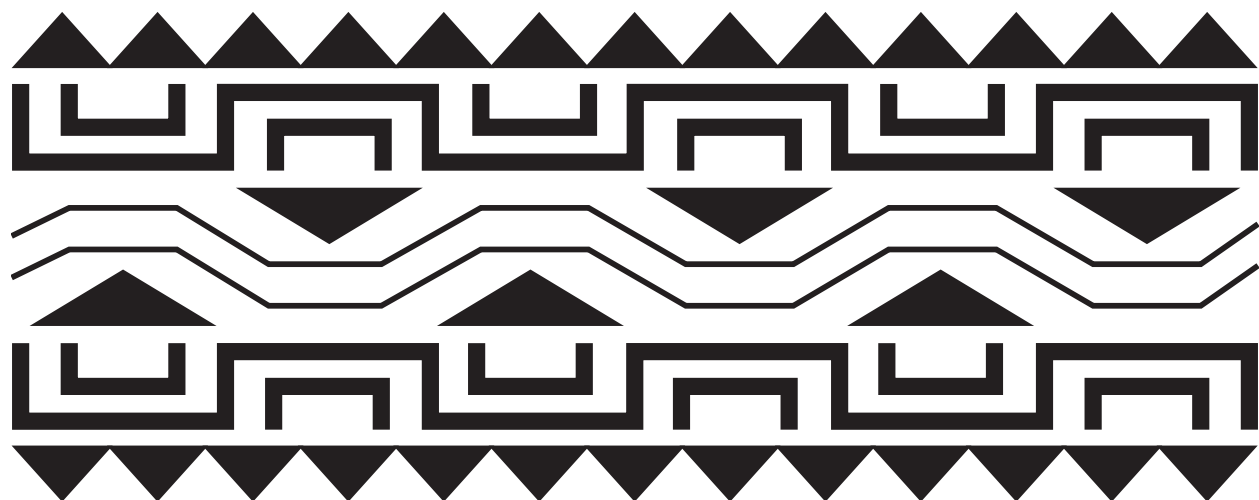
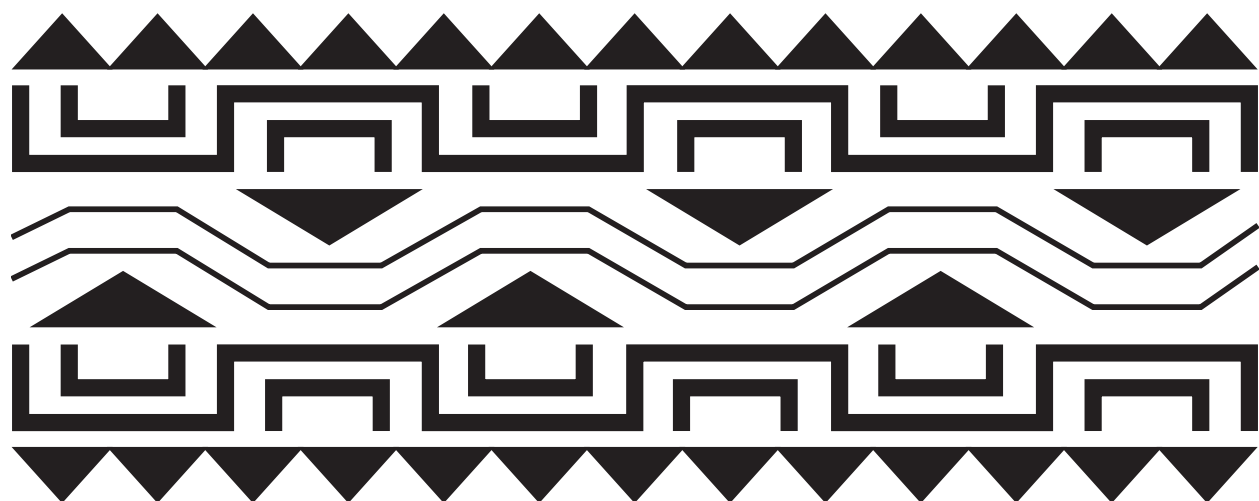
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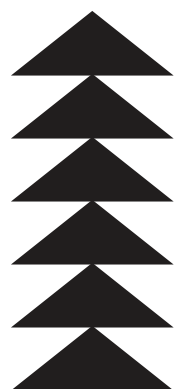
## **Dedication**

For my father Skandu.oo Timothy Twitchell.

For my mothers Kaaldaakeit Debra Carltikoff and Jilkatéet Marion Madden.

For my baby brother Tlaxaneis' Ch'éeni Corbin Carltikoff.

The only thing between you and me is a life dedicated to your honor.



## Acknowledgments

This work is dedicated first and foremost to the future generations, who will inherit the beauty, power, complexity, and responsibility of the Tlingit language. This and other works simply would not exist if not for the strength, resilience, courage, and rebellion of previous generations who refused to let our language go, thus ensuring that it would survive in the face of political policies and social pressures that aimed to eradicate our people by prohibiting and shaming the use of our language. The ability to stand up in the face of the genocide draws inspiration worldwide from those who have stood up to defend and reclaim that which is theirs: land, language, education, health, and more.

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Williams helped guide it into being a dissertation instead of a collection of papers, and Éedaa Heather Burge painstakingly read several drafts and found the many typos, awkward phrasings, and self-contradictions that are likely to occur in large projects that are deeply connected to the author at the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional levels. Additional feedback was given on drafts, including suggestions for additional sources and wonderful feedback on how to write more powerfully and concisely by William “Pila” Wilson, support and suggestions from L.Jaak Alice Taff, Dionne Yeidikook’áa Brady-Howard, and Yaan Jiyeet Gáax Thomas Thornton, and Tlingit language clarification and assistance from Guneiwí Marsha Hotch.

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## Table of Contents

Dedication . . . . .	iii
Acknowledgments . . . . .	v
Abstract . . . . .	xix
Introduction . . . . .	1
Shóogunáx (The Beginning) . . . . .	1
Literature Review . . . . .	5
1 The State of the Tlingit Language . . . . .	13
1.1 Introduction . . . . .	14
1.2 People and Geography. . . . .	15
1.3 Clan Law, Kinship, & Identity . . . . .	16
1.4 Language family. . . . .	18
1.5 The Tlingit Language. . . . .	21
1.6 Language Challenges. . . . .	24
1.7 The Future of the Tlingit Language . . . . .	28

2	Oppression and Cultural Genocide Among the Tlingit. . . . .	33
2.1	The Need to Document Child Torture and Humiliation . . . . .	34
2.2	The Narrative of Shaksháani Marge Dutson. . . . .	39
2.3	Loss Compounded By Loss Contained Within Systematic Racism . . . . .	61
2.4	Closing the Door on Ourselves. . . . .	62
2.5	Cultural Genocide & Cultural Hegemony . . . . .	66
2.6	The Fight for Civil Rights . . . . .	67
2.7	Endangered Languages and Population Motivations . . . . .	70
3	Increasing Adult Fluency in the Tlingit Language . . . . .	71
3.1	Current Efforts . . . . .	72
3.2	Understanding Barriers to Fluency . . . . .	73
3.3	Defining Fluency . . . . .	75
3.4	Creating Fluent Speakers: a Time Commitment . . . . .	79
3.5	Defining Immersion . . . . .	82
3.6	The Tlingit Adult Immersion Program . . . . .	84
3.7	Willingness to Communicate . . . . .	87
3.8	Mohawk Adult Immersion Program Recommendations . . . . .	89
3.9	Setting Goals and Celebrating Achievements. . . . .	91
4	Creating Safe Acquisition Environments . . . . .	93
4.1	Safe Spaces. . . . .	95

4.2	Language Revitalization in Healthy Communities. . . . .	96
4.3	Replacing Oppression With Core Cultural Values . . . . .	98
4.4	Battered People Syndrome . . . . .	100
4.5	Meta-cognition & Hyperconsciousness . . . . .	103
4.6	Revolutionary Self-Love . . . . .	104
5	Mending a People and Their Language . . . . .	109
5.1	The Discord of Violent Separations. . . . .	114
5.2	Best Practices for Language Revitalization . . . . .	116
5.3	Language Planning & Policy . . . . .	118
5.4	Instigating Cultural Shift . . . . .	123
5.5	Visualizing Holistic Language Movements . . . . .	129
5.6	Metacognition in Language Revitalization Movements . . . . .	135
5.7	Cherishing Our Ancestors, Ourselves, Our Grandchildren. . . . .	140
6	A 30 Year Language Plan for Tlingit . . . . .	143
6.1	Where We Are At, and Where We Are Going . . . . .	144
6.2	The Urgency of Stopping Tlingit Decline . . . . .	145
6.3	Building a Language Continuity Movement . . . . .	146
6.4	Indigenous Disruption Scales . . . . .	148
6.5	Resolving Disjuncture . . . . .	152
6.6	Current Efforts and Organizations . . . . .	156

6.7	A Tlingit Road Map for the Next Thirty Years . . . . .	165
7	Conclusion: The Future of the Tlingit Language . . . . .	179
7.1	Pulling the Pieces Together . . . . .	180
7.2	Visualizing a Living and Healthy Language . . . . .	187
7.3	Unity Above All Else . . . . .	188
7.4	Maintaining a Path of Resilience and Strength . . . . .	189
7.5	Crossing Borders and Geographies . . . . .	190
7.6	Tlingit Forever . . . . .	191
	Glossary of Terms . . . . .	195
	Sociolinguistic Terminology . . . . .	195
	Language Revitalization Activities and Programs . . . . .	198
	Indigenous Hyperconsciousness in Language Revitalization . . . . .	201
	Bibliography . . . . .	203

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Grenoble & Whaley Fluency Scale. . . . .	75
Table 2: SIL Second Language Proficiency Estimate of Vernacular Speakers . . . . .	76
Table 3: Rubin's Five Degrees of Fluency . . . . .	76
Table 4: ACTFL Fluency Scale Summary . . . . .	77
Table 5: Proposed Guide for Measuring Tlingit Fluency. . . . .	79
Table 6: Levels of Expected Performance for Language Learners . . . . .	81
Table 7: Levels of Expected Performance for Tlingit Language Learners. . . . .	81
Table 8: Estimated Time Commitment and Fluency for Tlingit Learners . . . . .	82
Table 9: Degrees of Tlingit Immersion . . . . .	84
Table 10: Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS). . . . .	150
Table 11: Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) . . . . .	151
Table 12: Steps In Reversing Language Shift: Severity of Intergenerational Dislocation . . . .	152





## List of Figures

Figure 1: Hilo Field Study, 2013 . . . . .	2
Figure 2: Tlingit Language Tree (from Crippen). . . . .	19
Figure 3: Lingít Kwáan & Dialects . . . . .	20
Figure 4: Estimated Number of Speakers and their location . . . . .	27
Figure 5: Tlingit Speakers Visit a Language Class . . . . .	35
Figure 6: Alaska Native Certificate of Citizenship . . . . .	69
Figure 7: Model of Language Endangerment I. . . . .	74
Figure 8: Immersion & Fluency Expectation Graph . . . . .	83
Figure 9: Willingness to Communicate . . . . .	88
Figure 10: Spheres of Language Revitalization. . . . .	117
Figure 11: Language Planning and Maintenance . . . . .	124
Figure 12: Domains, Registers, & Role Relations. . . . .	125
Figure 13: Indigenous Counterhegemonic Transformation . . . . .	126
Figure 14: Unfragmented Indigenous Language Movement Building. . . . .	130

Figure 15: Domains and Functions Through Indigenous Metacognition. . . . .	136
Figure 16: Tlingit Curricula Model . . . . .	147
Figure 17: Current Tlingit Language Activities. . . . .	162

## **Abstract**

The Tlingit language has experienced drastic losses over the past two decades in terms of total number of speakers and places where the language is used. This steady decline in speakers was drastically accelerated as the last generation who grew up in a time when Tlingit was the primary language of homes and communities reach their sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties. The youngest first language speakers are in their 60s, although most of them are in their eighties because intergenerational transmission severely declined in the second half of the 1900s, and has only recently returned with a few families who have committed to speaking with their children.

Recent estimates have determined that the Tlingit language has about 80 birth speakers of various levels, and 50 second language learners that could be considered at the “intermediate” level or higher according to ACTFL scales. There are probably only 10 speakers remaining who could be considered fully fluent and capable of higher forms of speaking, and most of them are over 70 years old. This combines to create an unprecedented crisis for the Tlingit language, which will require massive shifts in cultural values, ways of living, institutional cultures, and educational practices if the language is going to survive the next 50 years with more than a handful of speakers.

Instead of merely surviving, or preserving, the goal of the Tlingit Language Continuity Movement<sup>1</sup> is to have 3,000 speakers of the language by 2050. The current population of the Tlingit people is about

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<sup>1</sup> This name was proposed by Alice Taff, and represents a comprehensive language revitalization movement for Tlingit that is based upon commitments to speaking the language, and working collaboratively to develop intensive learning environments for adults (second language acquisition programs), and children (language nests and medium schools).

20,000 and of Tlingit territory is around 100,000. This means that 3,000 speakers would be 15% fluency among the Tlingit people and 3% within Tlingit territory, rising from 0.65% and 0.13% respectively.

This dissertation documents some of the events that have led to massive language decline, and proposes a series of interconnected methods that would result in language revitalization. In particular, increasing adult fluency, creating safe acquisition environments, mending a people and their language, and following a 30-year action plan is the proposed method to revitalizing the Tlingit language. These chapters are based upon the following research methods: reviewing published Tlingit language materials and recorded Tlingit language, documenting Tlingit language speakers and their thoughts on language learning and use, and incorporating theories from sociolinguistics, language revitalization, and post-colonial decolonizing methodologies.



## Introduction

Haa Dachx́ánx'i Sáani Kagéiyi Yís: Haa Yoo X́'atángi Kei Naltseen

*For Our Little Grandchildren: Language Revitalization Among The Tlingit*

---

Haa yoo x́'atángi káx̄ kúnaylagaaw!  
Kúnáx̄ a káx̄ kúnaylagaaw!

Fight for our language!  
Really fight for it!

Hél daa sá a yáx̄ koogei haa yoo x́'atángi.  
– Shaksháani

Nothing measures up to our language.  
– Marge Dutson, Ishkeetaan <sup>1</sup>

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### Shóogunáx̄ (The Beginning)

We start with a central question, and then spiral out into a web of connected concepts that reveal some of the causes of historical and current decline of the Tlingit language. To get to that central question, we first must travel to Hilo, Hawai'i for the 3rd International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (ICLDC), which took place on February 28 – March 3, 2013, at the Hawai'i Imin International Conference Center on the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa campus and concluded with a field study in Hilo. During that field study, a group was led through a variety of activities at 'Aha Pūnana Leo, Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u Hawaiian Medium School, 'Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai'i, and Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University

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<sup>1</sup> Dutson, Marge, in *Haa Yoo X́'atángi Káx̄ Kulagaawú: Language Warriors (final)*. Dir. X́'unei Lance Twitchell. *YouTube*. Nov 17, 2016,.Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4J7poWd2txU>.

of Hawai'i at Hilo, Hawai'i. This was the first time I had ever been on the island, and it was exciting to have a chance to see some of the programs and schools that I had read about in language revitalization texts. Towards the end of the conference there was a social dinner, and I happened to choose a table that had legendary figures in Indigenous language revitalization: Dorothy Karihwénhawe Lazore from the Mohawk language movement at Six Nations, and from Hawai'i Larry Kimura, Kauanoe Kamanā, and Nāmaka Rawlins.



Figure 1: Hilo Field Study, 2013

I would visit Hilo again the following year for the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium, and a year after that was enrolled in the Ph.D. in Hawaiian and Indigenous Language and Culture Revitalization at Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Hawai'i. After watching the activities of the language movement in Hilo, and engaging in conversations with a wonderful cohort that includes Tehota'kerá:tonh Jeremy "Teho" Green, tinakpáhngé Jimmy Teria, Kī'ope Raymond, Ku'ulei Higashi Kanahele, Kanoelani Diane Kawai'ae'-Harris, Ku'ulei Jean Bezilla, and Kainoa Ariola, the following central question emerged: if Tlingit has 130 speakers remaining in 2018, how could we have 3,000 by 2048?

This question has led to an exploration of current practices in Tlingit, and then the incorporation

of the Tlingit thought world, sociolinguistic language revitalization practices, and cultural critical theory, resulting in the following suggestions to accelerate Tlingit language revitalization: 1) increase adult fluency, 2) create and maintain safe acquisition environments, 3) mend the relationship of a people and their language, and 4) execute a thirty year plan of domain reclamation.

These concepts are interwoven and they attempt to diagnose and remedy a myriad of social complexities that include structural racism, battered people syndrome, recovering from language abandonment, and social change. There is a need to place social accountability upon governments, religious institutions, and the vast field of education, but this dissertation focuses on specific actions undertaken by the Tlingit people and organizations. None of this will be easy. The language is complex, the people are collectively distant from their own language, and social structures are staunchly racist & monolinual. One of our elders, *Kaakligéi* Norman James, once said of Tlingit grammar study: «ch'u uwayáa ax tundatáani kamdlíxís' a geiwú tin,» which translates to “it's as if my mind got tangled in a seine net.”<sup>2</sup> Decolonizing and executing language revitalization that is transformative will require tremendous effort and coordinated execution in order to untangle the net. In Tlingit, the verb for untangle—*akaawakei*—could also mean to track footprints or game trail, or to undo sewing or weaving, or for something to come unraveled.

The thought of turning the corner for Tlingit must begin with acknowledging the fact that this is the work of generations of people, and creating new speakers would not be possible without those who were brave enough to keep speaking while being oppressed and facing genocide. Gratitude and credit must also be given to those who worked to develop writing systems, methods of documenting the language, teaching it in a variety of settings, and creating changes at a wide variety of social spaces and institutions. I often hear people say that what we need is to have the language back in our homes. That is true, but repairing our homes and bringing our language into them requires tremendous value adjustments, cultural awareness, determination to give our language space, time, and power, courage and determination, and an ability to function as a learner, teacher, healer, leader, follower, and lover of all who are part of the language movement.

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<sup>2</sup> James, Norman. Personal Communication.

The ideas presented here are not intended to be in opposition to any that currently exist for Tlingit language revitalization. They are merely presented here as an interconnected series of thoughts based upon twenty years of asking the old people and listening to their ideas, studying the language and the fields of English and linguistics, and engaging in conversations with language advocates around the world about ideas, initiatives, determination, and courage. Maybe we are tangled in the seine net, but we are together, and we are determined to thrive and to carry the language to future generations.

Haa aaní káx kei nas.áx, Lingít at wuskóowu. Kúnáx áwé has kawtuwashéix'. Ch'a a kayaa yéi gaxtusanéi. Aaa. Has du eetíx' x'aakeidíx haa sitee.

*It is sounding off on our land, Tlingit wisdom. We really praise them (Our Ancestors). We are just going to imitate them. Yes. We are the seeds in their remains.*





## Literature Review

Aadé Kawdujixidi Yé: Yoo X'atánk Daat Yéi Jineií

*The Way It Has Been Written About: Work Around Language*

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Aaa.

Ch'a yéi gugénk' áwé a kaax shukaylits'úx  
haa tlagu kwáanx'i aadéi s kunoogu yé.  
– Kichnaalx

Yes.

We have uncovered only a tiny portion  
of the way our ancient people used to do things.  
– George Davis, Deisheetaan <sup>1</sup>

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This dissertation weaves together four primary areas of research: the Tlingit thought world, language revitalization theories in sociolinguistics, strategies from members of the 'Aha Pūnana Leo Hawaiian language movement, and post-colonial theory. While there are many texts and discussions that guide the main theories presented in this text, the first one is the thought world of the Tlingit people, which is what Kichnaalx George Davis refers to when he says «haa tlagu kwáanx'i aadéi s kunoogu yé» (the way our ancient people used to do things). My personal experiences with the Tlingit thought world involves an elementary understanding of an incredible and complex world that is possible to view in small parts through intensive language study, participation in ceremony, discussions with elders and cultural scholars, review of anthropological texts on Tlingit culture and language, and in works of translation from Tlingit to English and English to Tlingit. The primary

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<sup>1</sup> Davis, George, in *Haa Tuwundagu Yís: For Our Healing Spirit*. Ed. Nora and Richard Dauenhauer. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1990, 312–313.

teachers in this area are those who took the time to teach me to become a speaker of the Tlingit language. In particular, Kaxwaan Éesh George Davis, K̓eixwnéi Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Shaksháani Marge Dutson, K̓aanák Ruth Demmert, Kaséix Selina Everson, G̓unéiwti Marsha Hotch, K'óox Johnny Marks, K̓aakal.aat Florence Sheakley, Seidaayaa Mary Anderson, La.oos Tláa Ida Calmegane, K̓aakligéi Norman James, Keiyishí Bessie Cooley, Analahash Sam Johnston, Kingeistí David Katzeek, Xwaayeenák Richard Dauenhauer, Weihá Jeff Leer, Shgaté Jessie Johnnie, X'aagi Sháawu Keri Eggleston, Dzéiwsh James Crippen, Kóoshdaak'u Éesh Bill Fawcett, Keihéenák'w John Martin, K'altseen Carolyn Martin, Yaxdulákt' Lillian Austin, Dasdiyaa Ethel Makinen, Gooch Shaayí Harold Jacobs, Gaxtlein Paul Jackon, Gaxdaakashú Joe Hotch, G̓unáak'w Fred White, Koolyeik, Roby Littlefield, Naatsk'i Éesh Ted Valle, Achkwéi Lena Farkas, Daasdiyaa Nellie Lord, Naakil.aan Hans Chester, Jigeit Tláa Irene Cadiente, and Kinkawduneek Paul Marks.

My research in the Tlingit language consists of detailed examination of the translations by Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, especially those found in *Haa Shuka: Tlingit Oral Narratives* (1981) and *Haa Tuwunáagu Yís: For Our Healing Spirit* (1990). In addition to this is two decades of study with Nora and Richard, which included phone calls, classes where they were my teachers, and group and individual work with them on translation projects. In addition, a lot of their language revitalization strategies were incorporated from *Beginning Tlingit* (2000), the above mentioned texts, and also the article, "Technical, emotional, and ideological issues in reversing language shift: examples from Southeast Alaska," which was published in *Endangered Languages: Language Loss and Community Response* (Ed. Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley, 1998).

There have been a number of dissertations written that have focused on the Tlingit language, and the ones most relevant to this work are:

- *Text and Context of Tlingit Oral Tradition* by Xwaayeenák Richard Dauenhauer (1975), which examines Tlingit oral literature in the context of Tlingit social structure, and provides justification for studying oral literatures with the same level of academic prestige as European and Euro-American literatures. The work of Richard Dauenhauer and Nora Dauenhauer provide an epistemological foundation for documenting Tlingit, transcribing & translating,

and developing materials for second-language learners.

- *The Schetic Categories of the Tlingit Verb* by Weihá Jeff Leer (1991), which provides a detailed analysis of the Tlingit verb, and provides the framework for understanding complexities of verbal structure. The work of Leer has been particularly critical to documenting and understanding the functions of a wide variety of phenomena in verbs, and his scholarship documented many more verbs than works before it, and also included materials that were often omitted from other sources, such as reproductive and digestive body parts and terms.
- *The Grammar of Q: Q-Particles and the Nature of Wh-Fronting, as Revealed by the Wh-Questions of Tlingit* by L.tudax'aan Seth Cable (2010), which examines how questions are formed in Tlingit and examines theories on how questions are formed in languages. Cable has emerged as an important working linguist in Tlingit, and typically documents some of the finer points of the Tlingit language, such as the expression of doubt and ways that clauses can be tied together.
- *575 Tlingit Verbs: A Study Of Tlingit Verb Paradigms* by X'aagi Sháawu Keri Eggleston, which examines Tlingit verbal structure and documents over 575 verbs in up to 16 verb modes and conjugates many of them for person. This served as one of the most comprehensive verb documentation projects that resulted in readily useful materials so learners of Tlingit could quickly look up verbs in various modes as they studied the components that shift in order to conjugate verbs for mode and person. This work was later added to through a post-doctoral grant project managed by Eggleston, and the resulting data were uploaded to the Alaska Native Knowledge Network website at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.
- *The Syntax and Information Structure of Dislocation in Tlingit* (draft) by Dzéiwsh James Crippen, which promises to be the most thorough and detailed documentation of Tlingit grammatical structures ever created. Crippen has produced a number of documents through his doctoral work that have allowed learners to quickly look up language phenomena and put them to use through handbooks. He also has created a number of documents that explore complex subject matter through detailed linguistic analysis.

In addition, a number of theses have been written for Master's Degrees, and the ones most relevant to this work are:

- *A Syntactic Study of Tlingit* by Constance Naish (1966), which is a foundational work in Tlingit linguistics, documenting theories on how the language functions, in particular to the formation of clauses.
- *A Morphological Study of Tlingit* by Gillian Story (1966), which is also a foundational work in Tlingit linguistics, focusing on how the Tlingit verb functions in regards to other parts of speech.
- *Dauenhaurian Mediations: From Folkloristics To Decolonial Critique With The Work Of Richard Dauenhauer* (2017) by Chalyee Will Geiger, which examines the theoretical methodologies employed by scholar Richard Dauenhauer, and then applies the critical works of Fredric Jameson, Emmanuel Levinas, Enrique Dussel, Frantz Fanon, and Nelson Maldonado- Torres to Dauenhaurian folkloristics.
- *Prospective Aspect in Tlingit* (2017) by Éedaa Heather Burge, which examines three morphemes that are utilized for the prospective aspect in Tlingit, which other works refer to as the future mode. The goal is to gain a stronger understanding of concepts of time and event in Tlingit, as well as understanding the uses and meanings of components of Tlingit verbal structure.
- *Kaa Toowú Kei S Altsíngun Nuch / They Would Always Give Them Strength: A Project In Lingít Translation And Curriculum* (2018) by Yatootéen Mallory Story, which gives a detailed translation of a conversation between Jina.áakw Mary Rudolph and Kaseix Selina Everson while discussing aspects of translation and developing teaching materials out of a single conversation about traditional foods and dealing with death.

In addition to these sources, a wealth of materials exist for documenting and teaching the Tlingit language, including the *Tlingit Verb Dictionary* (1973) by Gillian Story & Constance Naish. This is a pivotal text for dedicated learners, and includes a majority of the known Tlingit verbs, including many sample sentences. Intermediate and advanced second language learners combine the material in this text with two unpublished manuscripts by Jeff Leer that are known as *Tlingit Verbs* (1974) and *Tlingit*

Stem List (1978).

A chance encounter at the University of Minnesota in 1996 helped develop my interest in Indigenous language revitalization work and scholarship. The pieces of the story became a bit more clear to me during the 2015 Stabilizing Indigenous Language Conference, where I was an invited keynote speaker. I shared a story during my speech about finding a book called *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages* (1996) and then writing an essay with the same title for an advanced composition class as an English Major. The TA who graded the paper made no comments on the paper, but gave it a C-grade and wrote, “why doesn’t everybody speak English?” I brought my complaints of racism to the teacher of the class, the head of the English Department, and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. This helped me see that the problem was massive and ongoing. After telling the story of that day I was talking with Jon Reyhner, who was a facilitator at the conference and oversaw the publishing of the conference proceedings. He said that he had boxes of the books, and was driving north from Flagstaff, Arizona with them. He saw a sign for the University of Minnesota and decided to drop some copies off at the American Indian Student Learning Center, where I would find them shortly afterwards.

This book serves as a foundational text for language revitalization theories for my scholarship, and have been augmented by two other texts that present a condensed version of many of the areas of study in the field of Indigenous language revitalization. *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* (2005) by Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley covers an enormous amount of language revitalization content and examples in a short space, as does *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization: An Introduction* (2006) by Tasaku Tsunoda. These are wonderful starting points for building an understanding of the field of language revitalization.

Once the reader has digested these texts, then a more detailed study can be found in the works of Joshua Fishman, especially the article “Domains and the Relationship Between Micro- and Macrosociolinguistics” (1972) and his landmark book, *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* (1991). These texts and other works of Fishman help lead to the formation of sociolinguistics, which is less interested in the ways that languages function, instead looking at the ways that societies and politics govern languages and how

they can be manipulated to foster language equity.

Several other texts inform my scholarship in language revitalization, in particular *Language Death* by David Crystal (1977), which seeks to document why languages are important and what is being done to stave off death. Another book, *When Languages Die: The Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge* (2007) by David Harrison, is similar and takes a look at specific ways that language extinction threatens the world, especially through the diminishment of specific knowledges and ways of seeing the world.

The final three texts that are critical to my understanding of language revitalization are similar in the way that the theories are applied to a single language in a particular circumstance. The above texts in language revitalization are foundational in their ability to cover a broad range of topics that apply to a number of situations, languages, places, and times. *Language Shift Among the Navajos: Identity Politics and Cultural Continuity* (2002) by Deborah House examines the ways in which the Navajo language may be shifting, but also focuses on the ways that cultural hegemony is dealt with in terms of counterhegemony and alternate hegemony. These views on hegemony have led to exercises with students and language programs on identifying what cultural hegemony is, and ways that a community might accept (hegemony), reject (non-hegemony), resist (anti-hegemony), and create anew (counterhegemony).

*Defying Maliseet Language Death: Emergent Vitalities of Language, Culture, and Identity in Eastern Canada* (2012) by Bernard Perley is of particular interest because he is ethnically Maliseet, and it is rare to find a text on language revitalization whose author is also writing about their heritage. Throughout the text, though, Perley often refers to himself as both an insider and an outsider because he does not speak the language and is applying academic methodologies to an Indigenous program. His critiques of the program and also of his people provide insights into theories on how people assign value to languages and what might be able to shift the collective social tendencies.

*We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabaskan Community* (2002) by Barbra Meek provides an examination of the relatively healthy Kaska language, which has fluency rates much higher than other northern Dene languages. Meek documents language

activities and examines the disjunctures that exist when Indigenous languages are in the process of separating from their speaking population. Some of the most helpful areas of research in this text address the dynamics of culture and shifting needs that are presented by languages that are losing domains.

The areas that influence the action plans come from the Hawaiian and Mohawk language movements and direct research with foundational members of the 'Aha Pūnana Leo movement and from conversations with Mohawk language teacher and activist Tehota'kerá:tonh Jeremy "Teho" Green. The texts that provide the most influence are *Kumu Honua Mauli Ola: He Kālaimana'o Ho'ona'auao 'Ōiwi Hawai'i* (2009), which is a text that documents the philosophies of the Hawaiian language movement. This collaboratively authored text is a guiding light for the Hawaiian language movement, and is supplemented by two comprehensive articles: "'Mai Loko Mai O Ka 'I'ini: Proceeding from a Dream'—The 'Aha Pūnana Leo Connection in Hawaiian Language Revitalization" (2001) by William H. Wilson and Kauanoe Kamanā document, and "USDE Violations of NAIA and the Testing Boycott at Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u School." (2012) by William Wilson document activities of the 'Aha Pūnana Leo Hawaiian language movement and also the successes of medium schools in Hawai'i.

These are all combined with a number of texts from the field of post-colonial critical theories on social change and equity. In particular, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) by Frantz Fanon offers a number of deep analyses of systems of oppression and genocide. In particular, Fanon's analyses of the dehumanization processes in colonialism are helpful in formulating methods of creating social change by raising social awareness to the horrors of colonialism and how they manifest today in the forms of cultural hegemony, marginalization, omission, and erasure.

Adding to this theoretical base are two texts by Enrique Dussel: the article "Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)" (1993) and the book *Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* (2013). These works examine the concept of modernity and how that manifests itself in colonial social structures and institutions, and also the ways that modernity and enlightenment as philosophical concepts are foundational to Eurocentricism that masks itself as a universal human progress. This idea of humanity moving forward with Europe and its descendants at



the forefront is core to justifying—or more often refusing to even examine—the manifest destiny that is globalization.

If modernity is the vehicle that allows colonialism to exist in such a privileged state that examination is seen as backwards, chaos-inducing, or unpatriotic, then its partner in genocidal crime is coloniality. These concepts are important to understand in order to untangle the value systems that are nested within colonizing languages. These concepts are defined by Walter Mignolo in “Delinking the Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality” (2007). This text examines modernity and coloniality as two sides of the same coin, as in the following excerpt: “De-coloniality, then, means working toward a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal of society over those that differ, which is what modernity/ coloniality does and, hence, where decolonization of the mind should begin. The struggle is for changing the terms in addition to the content of the conversation.”<sup>2</sup>

The final primary text utilized in this research is *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012) by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, which posits the act of decolonization through reformation of institutions and by re-envisioning the acts of research, writing, and working in communities that have been oppressed. Collectively, these texts provide a framework of decolonization of the mind, institutions, cultures, practices, and behaviors. This dissertation, then attempts to take these strands and envision them as a single thing that is braided together and utilized as a tool to re-examine the Tlingit language revitalization movement. For decades now, incredible minds and wonderful people have worked tirelessly to bring the language back to strength, and these fields of research provide additional tools to «aax̱ has akaawataan» (to drive them off of it).

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<sup>2</sup> Mignolo, Walter D. “Delinking the Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality.” *Cultural Studies* 21.2–3 (March/May 2007), 459.





## The State of the Tlingit Language

Haa Léelk'u Hás Yoo X'atángi, Haa Dachxánx'í Sáani Yoo X'atángi

*The Language of Our Grandparents, the Language of Our Little Grandchildren*

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A shunaayát ágé nkwaagoot  
ax káaalk'w hás?

Aaa.

A shunaayát ágé nkwaagoot?

Ya k'éik'w áyá tléil yan ulxlayaakwch,

aaa,

yá k'eik'w.

Eeshandéin tuwateeyi káa

káx' áwé daak koolyeechch

yee aat hás.

Aax áwé

has du x'wáal'i a kaadéi

has a kooldánch

wé eeshandéin tuwateeyi káa.

Aagáa áwé tléil áwé too kwdunook nuch

has du x'wáal'i.

Aagáa áwé

yee tula.eesháani tín áwé

has du kudi kaadéi

has ayakawdliyi yáx áwé

has du daa ax tuwatee yee aat hás.

– Naa Tláa

Can I reach the end,  
my brothers' children?

Yes.

Can I reach the end?

These terns I haven't completely explained,

yes,

these terns.

Your fathers' sisters would

fly out over the person

who is feeling grief.

Then

they would let their down fall

like snow

over the person who is feeling grief.

That's when their down

isn't felt.

That's when

I feel it's as if your

fathers' sisters are flying

back to their nests

with your grief.

– Jessie Dalton, T'akdeintaan <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dalton, Jessie, in *Haa Tuwunáagu Yís: For Our Healing Spirit*. Ed. Nora and Richard Dauenhauer. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1990, 250–251.

## 1.1 Introduction

The Tlingit language is medicine to the Indigenous people who inhabit Lingít Aaní (Tlingit Territory) and to those who have taken the time to learn the language of the Lingít Aaní—an area approximately 54,000 square miles<sup>2</sup> that encompasses Southeast Alaska, Southwestern Yukon Territory, and Northwestern British Columbia. If this area were a state, it would be the 28th largest in the United States.<sup>3</sup> It consists of 20 communities, fifteen of which are connected through waterways of the Inside Passage of the Northwest Coast, and five Inland communities that connect to the coast via ancient trails or the relatively new Alaska-Canadian Highway.

This is the land of cedar longhouses, dugout canoes, and totem poles, and has been connected by vast trail systems that brought the wealth of the sea to inland communities in exchange for the riches of their mountainous regions. Over the years, the Tlingit people have defended their lands against Russian fur traders and American prospectors hungry for gold. Tlingit people have fought for civil rights since colonization began, sometimes through acts of warfare and later through the American legal system. Warriors like William Paul led the charge to desegregate schools, end Jim Crow voting restrictions for Alaska Natives, and begin land claims processes, while others like Elizabeth & Roy Peratrovich fought to prohibit discrimination practices that created “white only” zones that were marked with signs that read, “no Indians or dogs allowed.”

The Tlingit people have developed a series of balanced and reciprocating systems that involve clan law, kinship systems, knowledge of medicinal plants, communication with all things on the land, understanding of a complex spiritual landscape, and trading networks that cover the entirety of the Northwest Coast. At the heart of all of this was the language, which codes an immeasurable amount of information that comes from the same language being in the same place for what must have been thousands of years. Paramount within Tlingit culture and language is the concept of *at.óow*, which could translate to “something that was paid for” but really means, “sacred clan property.” This is a category of things that have high functions in the language and culture, and should not be used or

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<sup>2</sup> “Google Maps Area Calculator Tool.” *Draft Logic*. Updated May 11, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.daftlogic.com/projects-google-maps-area-calculator-tool.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> United States Census Bureau. “State Area Measurements and Internal Point Coordinates.” Updated Jan 1, 2010. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov.geo/reference/state-area.html>.

publicly referred to by those outside of the clan unless permission has been granted. At.óow of a clan can be physical items like regalia, houses, totem poles, land & hunting/fishing/gathering rights, and people. It can also be more conceptual items like names, stories, crests, and songs.

## 1.2 People and Geography

There are two main areas of Tlingit territory: éil'ká (on the salt water) and dakká (on the inland). The people of the éil'ká have developed a life based around marine travel and a coastal diet that includes fermented or smoked fish, sea mammals, guwakaan/kuwakaan (deer), jánwu/jínwu (mountain goat), and shellfish. The Dakká Lingít (Inland Tlingit) traveled primarily on trail networks that connected them to Éil'ká Lingít (Coastal Tlingit) and subsist more on large mammals like dzísk'w/ tsísk'w (moose), watsíx (caribou), and tawéi (mountain sheep) and inland fish like daleiyí (lake trout), t'ási (grayling), and lóox (whitefish). Both inland and coastal groups gathered nearly every kind of edible berry and plant, although the interior has mountainous plants distinct from the marine environment adapted vegetation found along the coast.

Many elders refer to the bountiful medicines that are collectively called kayaaní (plants; leaves; vegetation). Harvesting includes prayers and offerings prior to collection, and knowledge of kayaaní and their many uses can heal wounds, strengthen the body, and stave off death. The majority of foods and medicines were gathered and prepared in spring, fall, and summer, although hunting, fishing, and some gathering would take place in the winter. With most of the year's food gathered by late fall, the people would begin to travel within their communities for annual ceremonies called ku.éex' (to invite people), where songs, stories, and foods are exchanged, gifts are given to guests by the host clan, debts are paid, and names are formally given.

The invitation ceremony was the most important gathering for Tlingit people, and historically included many variations, including shaawát x̱áni ku.éex' ("next to a woman invitation;" marriage), sigóowu ku.éex' ("fun invitation"), and du x̱'é x̱ánt atxaayí ku.éex' ("food next to her mouth invitation;" young woman coming out of seclusion). Today the ku.éex' is primarily a memorial event, marking the passing of enough time to release the grief from the loss of beloved clan members.

All of this occurs in the geography of Lingít Aaní, which has changed dramatically since the Tlingit people first came to the coast in a northward migration that is marked by glacial periods and the warmer interglacials, such as the end of the last ice age when sea levels rose high enough to push people to live on mountaintops or move back to the interior. At the end of this period, often referred to as Yáa Aan Ḡalakú (“This Land Flood” or more commonly translated as “The Flood”), the majority of the current Tlingit clans formed and claimed their territory, although major migrations continued as clans split from one another or traveled en masse for new resources.

The coast is primarily islands and fjords with sharp rises from the ocean to the mountaintop. Because of the northern latitude and the cloudy climates of a temperate rainforest, nearly all known villages were in protective coves, and were often southern-facing to capture the most direct sunlight. The interior is a series of rolling hills and mountain ranges with villages near large lakes that are connected by a trail system. In the central part of Lingít Aaní, the most prominent trees are shéiyí (Sitka spruce), keishísh (alnus alder), and yán (hemlock); in the northern part it is dúḵ (cottonwood), at daayí (birch), dakla.é (quaking aspen), and lk’óox’eit (balsam fir); and in the southern region laax (red cedar), xáay (yellow cedar), and more rarely sáks (yew).

### **1.3 Clan Law, Kinship, & Identity**

Tlingit society revolves around clan identity, which is matrilineal—inherited through one’s mother. Traditional culture revolves around reciprocating relationships that occur between two opposite sides: one that is referred to as Ch’áak’ (Eagle) in éil’ká (coastal) and Ḡooch (Wolf) in dakká (inland), and the other being Yéil (Raven) in éil’ká and Ts’axweil (Crow) in dakká. Someone from the Eagle/Wolf side is expected to marry someone from the Raven/Crow side, and because clan identity follows a mother’s lineage, fathers are the opposite clan of their children. This creates special bonds between clans, and the entire clan of the father could refer to his children as children of the entire clan, and in traditional ceremonies one group hosts events for their opposites, who are considered guest clans. Tlingit scholars Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer describe Tlingit clans in the introduction to one of their texts as:

All of Tlingit society is organized in two reciprocating divisions called moieties (moiety: pronounced moy-uh-tee, meaning “half,” or “one of two equal parts,” and defined as “one of two basic complementary tribal subdivisions”). Tlingit society is also matrilineal—organized through the mother’s line. Although the words are often popularly confused, the term “matrilineal,” meaning that a person’s blood line is traced primarily through the mother, is not the same as “matriarchal,” meaning “ruled by women.” Tlingit society is matrilineal, but not matriarchal. A Tlingit individual is born into his or her mother’s moiety, clan, and house group.<sup>4</sup>

There are 78 known clans, of which 37 are Eagle/Wolf and 40 are Raven/Crow, with one additional one that sits outside of the two-sided moiety system. The clans have spread out from groups during periods of large migrations, and are the primary factor in personal identity and kinship structures. In precontact times, the clan was the form of governance and the owners and protectors of at.óow.

The same clan can be located in several different communities, and the clans of a community collective would govern their area through consultation with one another through their hít s'aatí (house leader) or kaa sháade hání (“standing at the head of people” or leader). Each clan would have several houses, and the house would have a name and its own specific at.óow. If the clan grew large enough or if there was a reason to separate, then they might take the name of that house as their clan name and move to a new location. Lingít Aaní is a nation, and within that nation there are regions that take the name –kwáan (people of –). The clans and houses within a –kwáan collectively govern that region and know which areas are owned by which clan.

Within this complex structure is the Tlingit kinship system, which notes clan relationships more commonly than biological relationships. There is no term for cousin because a person is either the same clan and age group (sibling) or they are another same-moiety clan (friend/relative) or opposite clan member (in-law). Some kinship terms are the same regardless of gender, such as –léelk'w (–’s grandparent), and others differ solely on whether they are members of the same clan or the opposite, such as –kéilk' (–’s maternal niece/nephew) and –káalk'w (–’s paternal niece/nephew). Kinship terms

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4 Dauenhauer, Nora Marks and Richard Dauenhauer. *Haa Tuwunáagu Yís*, 7.

can be inherited by carrying the same name as an ancestor, in which case someone who is fifty years older than someone may refer to them as *aḡ sáni* (my paternal uncle). These terms can also change due to personal relationships, where someone can become closer to someone and the kinship term changes to show that personal relationship. This often happens if someone steps into the role of a deceased relative, such as assisting with the parenting the children of a brother who is deceased.

The relationships between clans is at the center of Tlingit social functions, and children are raised to be respectful of everyone because their actions could put the entire clan in debt if not careful, especially in public. When a clan loses a member to death, it is the opposite clan, especially the members of the father's clan, who step up and take care of the clan in mourning. This caretaking involves sitting with the body as the spirit prepares to leave and preparing meals for the immediate family. At the *ku.éex'* where the deceased is being honored, the actions of the clans that helped are acknowledged and paid for with gifts and money.

All of this is collectively referred to as clan law, and these structures and cultural proceedings were attacked during times of intense forced assimilation by the United States government and churches. The breakdown of clan law resulted in a loss of traditional governance and cooperative ownership, although many communities have held onto or reconstructed clan law at various levels. The Tlingit language contains much of the interrelationships and codes of conduct, and with the highly endangered state of the language the Tlingit culture—the systems and laws that define it—are also in danger of being lost.

Collectively, the concepts of Tlingit identity and society are called *Haa Kusteeyí* which can translate to “our way of life” or “our culture,” but encompasses much more. Violations of clan law can result in war or large payments to bring things back into balance, and the clans of the Tlingit people have the final say when it comes to *at.óow* and the functions of people who live by the language and laws encoded within.

## **1.4 Language family**

Tlingit is one branch of the geographically massive Na-Dene language family, the other being Eyak-

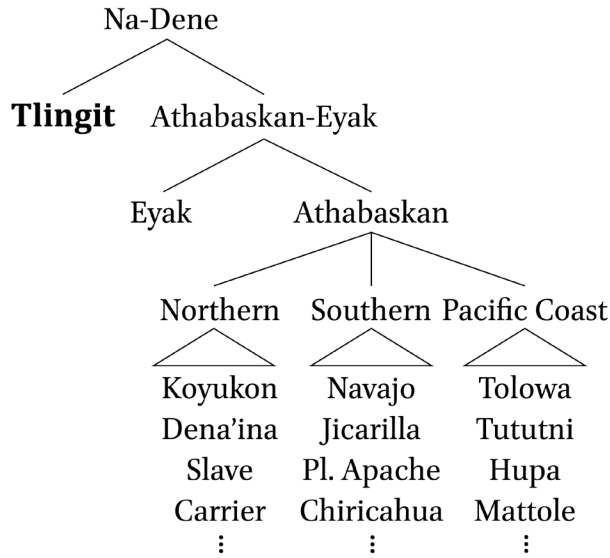


Figure 2: Tlingit Language Tree (from Crippen)

Athabaskan. Eyak, now a sleeping language, was located at the northern border of the Tlingit homeland. The Athabaskan languages are further divided into a Northern Branch, the homelands of which cover the interior of Alaska and the Yukon, and a Southern Branch, which includes several languages along the Washington and Oregon Coast, Navajo, Apache, and others.<sup>5</sup> Tlingit is on its own branch in the Na-Dene language tree because it separated

from the others long ago, and developed into a language that shares many patterns but is quite different than its relatives. Studies have shown it to be closer to Eyak than other languages in the tree, but even that shows only distant grammatical similarities. If you learn one of the Na-Dene languages, then you have similar sounds and grammatical patterns, but the ease of learning another depends upon the closeness of the languages and the dedication of the learner. Knowledge of one only gives a sense of patterns and second language acquisition skills. Tlingit and the other languages on this tree are mutually unintelligible.

Within Tlingit there are four main dialects: Northern, Transitional, Southern, and Tongass. These dialects have some community-specific variations which may be sound substitutions or different words for things, but the main difference between the four dialects are how the language handles vowels and contraction in verbs. Northern Tlingit vowel variations: short and high (ʔ), short and low (v), long and high (ʔv), and long and low (vv). Southern Tlingit vowels are: short and high (ʔ), short and low (v), long and fading (ʔṽ), and long and low (vv). Tongass Tlingit vowels were: short and short (v), fading (vh), glottalized (vʔv), and long (vv).

Recent studies estimate there are approximately 130 speakers of the language today, which

<sup>5</sup> Crippen, James. "Tlingit Verbal Structure Handbook." Vancouver: Department of Linguistics, University of British Columbia, 2013, 3.



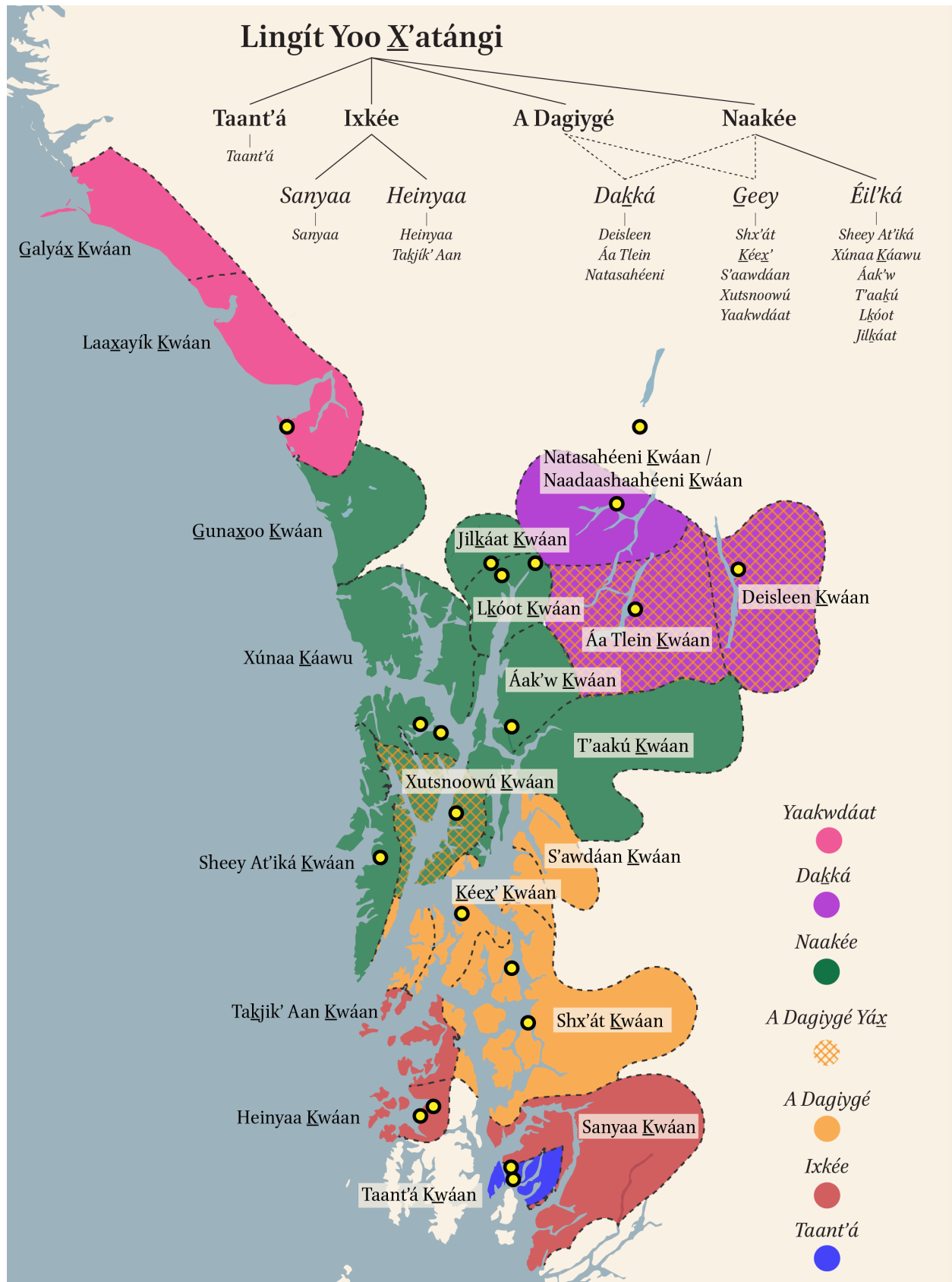


Figure 3: Lingít Kwáan & Dialects



includes all second language learners of all levels. The majority of these speakers are of the Northern Dialect. The Transitional and Southern Dialects combined have very few speakers, while Tongass—the most conservative dialect linguistically—has no known speakers. Efforts have been made to create materials that show both dialect and community variations. There are two orthographies for Tlingit, one used by the Coastal Tlingit of Alaska and another used by the Inland Tlingit of Canada. This has created some division in terms of ways of recording the language. The facts that Inland Tlingit people are culturally different than their coastal relatives and that they are also citizens of a different colonizing nation states have sometimes increased that division. In recent years, however, all three Inland First Nations Governments have voted to use the coastal orthography.

At times this variation becomes a mix of a citizenship identity between the U.S. and Canada which is accelerated by the fact that all inland Tlingit communities are located in Canada. A student of Tlingit should learn both writing systems in order to utilize all Tlingit materials that have been developed since the 1980s, which adds unnecessary complexity to language learning and use. This conflict of writing systems was initiated and maintained by non-Tlingit linguists, and has created unfortunate divisions in the “way we do things” among Tlingit people. Over time, linguistic unity should return to Tlingit people regardless of the number of writing systems that are used for the language.

## 1.5 The Tlingit Language

Tlingit has 42 consonants, 4 vowels that each have 4 variations in length and tone (short and high, short and low, long and high, long and low), 2 additional vowels rarely used on the coast but present in the interior, and a glottal stop. There are five additional vowel-sonorant combinations (aay, aaw, eey, eew, oow).<sup>6</sup> There are words and songs in the Tlingit language that are dated in Tlingit tradition to the primordial settlement of Tlingit territory. Language documentation began in 1846 with the Russian Orthodox priest Veniaminov,<sup>7</sup> and includes major contributions in literacy and documentation by

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6 Crippen, James. “Tlingitology Seminar Notes: Background and Morphology.” Vancouver: Department of Linguistics, University of British Columbia, 2013, 7–8.

7 Veniaminov, Ioann. *Notes on the Kolosh [Tlingit] and Kodiak [Eskimo] Languages*. St. Petersburg: Academy of Sciences Typography, 1846, titlepage. General Collections, Library of Congress (85a).

Constance Naish & Gillian Story in the 1960s–70s, Nora Marks Dauenhauer & Richard Dauenhauer in the 1970s–2000s, Jeff Leer in 1970s–2000s, and current contributions by Keri Eggleston (nee Edwards), Seth Cable, James Crippen, Alice Taff, and X'unei Lance Twitchell.

There are well over a thousand hours of documented Tlingit, with the largest contributions by Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, Frederica de Laguna, and Leer, with other sizable contributions by the Sitka Native Education Program (SNEP), Henry Denny, Taff, and Twitchell. There are also recordings from the late 1800s and early 1900s from John Swanton and George Emmons. The majority of these recordings are audio, although recent efforts have been made to shift to video. Of these recordings, fewer than 1% are transcribed and fewer yet are translated,<sup>8</sup> which means there is no shortage of work to do since the language had a richer vocabulary and grammar when there were more speakers of a wider variety of speaking levels at the times much of the material was recorded. The earliest recordings are from wax cylinders in the early 1900s, and the majority of the material comes from a period between 1970–1990 when Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer were recording material from a large number of speakers.

One of the issues regarding recorded materials is a question of access. There are collections currently housed within the Alaska Native Language Archive at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Yukon Native Language Centre at the Yukon College, University of Alaska Southeast, Sealaska Heritage Institute, and the Alaska State Library. These collections have been digitized, but due to clan ownership and sensitivity of some materials, most of the material has been kept off of the Internet. Even with more material coming out on the Internet, data and speed restrictions in rural communities make it largely inaccessible regardless of where it is located.

There have been four major dictionaries created, the first being noun (1963, 1976) and verb dictionaries (1973) by Naish & Story, then a noun dictionary (2001) by Leer, Hitch, & Ritter, and a combined and comprehensive dictionary (2009) by Edwards. Recently verb complexes have been published on the web by Eggleston (nee Edwards) that show verbs conjugated for person and

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8 Crippen, James. "Tlingitology Seminar Notes: Background and Morphology," 6.

mode.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Crippen has created the “Tlingit Verbal Structure Handbook,” which takes the complexities of Tlingit grammar and consolidates them down to tables and charts in a portable handbook. Grammars and other materials that explain Tlingit grammatical structure have been created by Naish & Story, Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, Leer, Eggleston, Cable, Crippen, and Twitchell that thoroughly document Tlingit verbs, verbal structure, and grammar. These have been collected and made available on a blog run by Twitchell and the University of Alaska Southeast ([www.tlingitlanguage.com](http://www.tlingitlanguage.com)).

All of this is necessary because the segmental and tonal phonology and Tlingit verbal structure make for one of the world's most complex languages. Tlingit verb conjugations are at times completely unpredictable, but students can learn to conjugate for singular and plural 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person and also 4th person pronouns with a high degree of accuracy and can learn the rules for the most common verb modes. In Tlingit, verbs are conjugated for event instead of time,<sup>10</sup> and many of the verb uses are highly metaphorical. Every verb has a root that contains its core meaning, and the new verbs are formed by changing the classifier and sometimes by adding one or more thematic prefixes. The classifier marks middle voice,<sup>11</sup> changes in transitivity, whether or not the verb has been completed, and methods or devices for executing the verb. Thematic prefixes are embedded particles that have meaning, the most common probably being *ka-* (horizontal surface) and *ǵa-* (vertical surface). There are several homonyms in verb roots, thematic prefixes, nouns, particles, and other parts of speech, which can also create confusion for the learner of Tlingit. There are thousands of verb roots, and changes in the classifier and thematic prefixes create thousands of verbs out of those roots.

At a deeper level is accessing and existing in the Tlingit thought world. At times, this is a question of word order or how to say a certain thing, but more so it is the way the world is perceived and

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9 Tlingit uses verb modes to convey information about tense, aspect, mood, and modality. A series of prefixes and suffixes interact with changes in stem variation in order to communicate aspects of the verb (happened, didn't happen, is happening, is not happening, will happen, will not happen, etc.).

10 James Crippen, Seth Cable, Keri Eggleston, and Heather Burge have all written about aspect in the Tlingit verb, and recent theories suggest that Tlingit verbs favor informing whether or not something has happened instead of when something might have happened. In fact, Crippen has suggested in conversations that Tlingit verbs do not ever include information on time. There are verbs that are conjugated the same whether it was now or yesterday, because the focus is on the event and whether it has occurred. For more information, see works of the authors listed above.

11 Middle voice occurs when the subject is also the object in a sentence, with the most obvious examples being “s/he did it to her/himself.”

interacted with, which brings in Haa Kusteeyí (our way of life), Haa Shagóon (our ancestors), Haa Shuká (our ancestors, selves, and future generations), and Haa Shagéinyaa (our creator and protecting power). Much of this information has been attacked by missionaries and American education systems, both of which sought cultural assimilation through a variety of genocidal approaches. Some of the concepts within the language have become foreign to the Tlingit people, as has the language itself.

## **1.6 Language Challenges**

There is a very small critical mass of speakers and advanced learners of Tlingit, and there may only be one or two places on earth where the Tlingit language is spoken even half the time among the people there. There are about 130 speakers of the language with various levels of competence in the language. Many second language speakers among these can introduce themselves in the language, use basic greetings, and talk about concepts like the weather and feelings. A smaller group yet can recall stories, either historical/traditional or casual, although only a handful can do so according to Tlingit oratory, which requires figurative language, repetition, riddles, and proverbs. Even smaller yet is a group that can conjugate verbs in grammatically and conceptually complex modes, and are able to talk about anything while staying completely in the language. Most, however, cannot form their own sentences and use those sentences for a variety of purposes.

The boarding school era in the United States and residential school era in Canada has done damage by violently removing the language from the population by forcing children into school systems that prohibited its use. Speaking meant ridicule from teachers and white classmates, and could result in what elders have recently referred to as “torture.” A small sample of these stories have been surfacing, and they include: lifting children up by the hair and shaking them violently in front of the class while threatening to beat them in the face; putting toddlers in ice cold showers; sending children out during the winter to put their tongue on a metal flagpole. One of the more common narratives emerging in dakká involves “boxing the ear” where an adult teacher would cup their hand and smack it over the ear of a child. During a recent conversation with one community member, she speculated that most of the teachers were right-handed, and that is why most of our elders cannot

hear out of their left ears.

The boarding school and residential school era, often referenced to as the Termination Era of Native American history, is a dark field of intergenerational trauma. That era has not been adequately researched in terms of long-term health implications; the relative silence, ignorance, and denial that exists about North American genocide; and the accountability of governments and churches. Yet more complicated is the ongoing existence of racism in Alaska and Canada that results in obvious and subtle notions of racial superiority. It exist in nearly all aspects of society, but most dangerously in education and government.

School programs enrolling Tlingit students have been well-developed and supported over the last fifty years in Lingít Aaní, but do not have enough widespread positive academic impact on Tlingit communities due to the standardized form of education that has developed in Alaskan elementary schools. Knowledge of Indigenous people and their languages is often provided in an optional program for Tlingit students when such a program exists at all, and typically targets “at risk” or “low performing” youth who are already struggling within a system that refuses to acknowledge them as human beings with unalienable rights to pursue their own culture and/or identity that differs from that of the majority culture. Terms like “genius” and “intellectual” are rarely used in reference to Alaska Native people. Alaska’s students of all backgrounds graduate with very little real knowledge about Alaska Native cultures, languages, histories, and politics.

Perhaps even more devastating to the survival of Tlingit is the absence of language advocacy and study on the part of leaders in Tlingit country. The last decade has seen the deaths of some of the last of the Tlingit leaders who were also speakers of their language. Alaska Native governance is a highly complex issue on its own, with layers of governance including traditional governance (clans for Tlingit), Alaska Tribes, Regional Tribes, ANCSA (Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act) Regional Corporations & Village Corporations, civil rights organizations like the Alaska Native Brotherhood (ANB) and Alaska Native Sisterhood (ANS), and various Tribal consortia and other entities. While this landscape is politically complex there is one similarity: the leaders are not leading the language revitalization efforts. There is backing from these organizations in terms of dedicating resources and

allowing language advocates to devote themselves and develop careers in language, but if we followed their lead right now, we would leave our language behind.

This type of critique of one's own people is dangerous to one's own people, especially when those people are already suffering oppression in an environment that was governed by racist policies and still allows racism to exist within its institutions and policies. The people are already down, and now you have to tell them about a failure that will likely lead to language death. There have been hundreds of people who have studied the Tlingit language at a variety of levels—from culture camps to community gatherings, university courses to immersion events—and yet only a few have emerged as speakers of the language who can use verbs correctly and talk about complex subject matter.

Nora and Richard Dauenhauer have examined these matters through papers and books, and after decades of working in the language their forecasts are grim. In their first collection of translated works, *Haa Shuka*, they noted nearly four decades ago:

Each death brings the Tlingit language and the great oral tradition composed and transmitted in the language closer to extinction. We work with the sober awareness that linguists predict the extinction of the Tlingit language within the next 50 or 60 years. Children no longer speak Tlingit. Few young parents speak the language; as far as we know, there are no speakers under the age of 30, and there are only a handful of speakers under the age of 50.

We have no doubt that many aspects of Tlingit culture and heritage will endure and thrive in spoken and written English, but the Tlingit language itself, and those traditions which are bound to the language will probably not survive.

Tlingit is one of the most complicated languages in the world, and it is unrealistic to expect it to make a comeback as a spoken language through classroom teaching—at least as presently constituted. Still, it is very realistic to expect that many people in coming generations will learn to read and appreciate the ancestral language through study of the classics of the past, and it is reasonable to hope that in the meantime families and communities will work together to cultivate their traditions, whether in English or Tlingit,

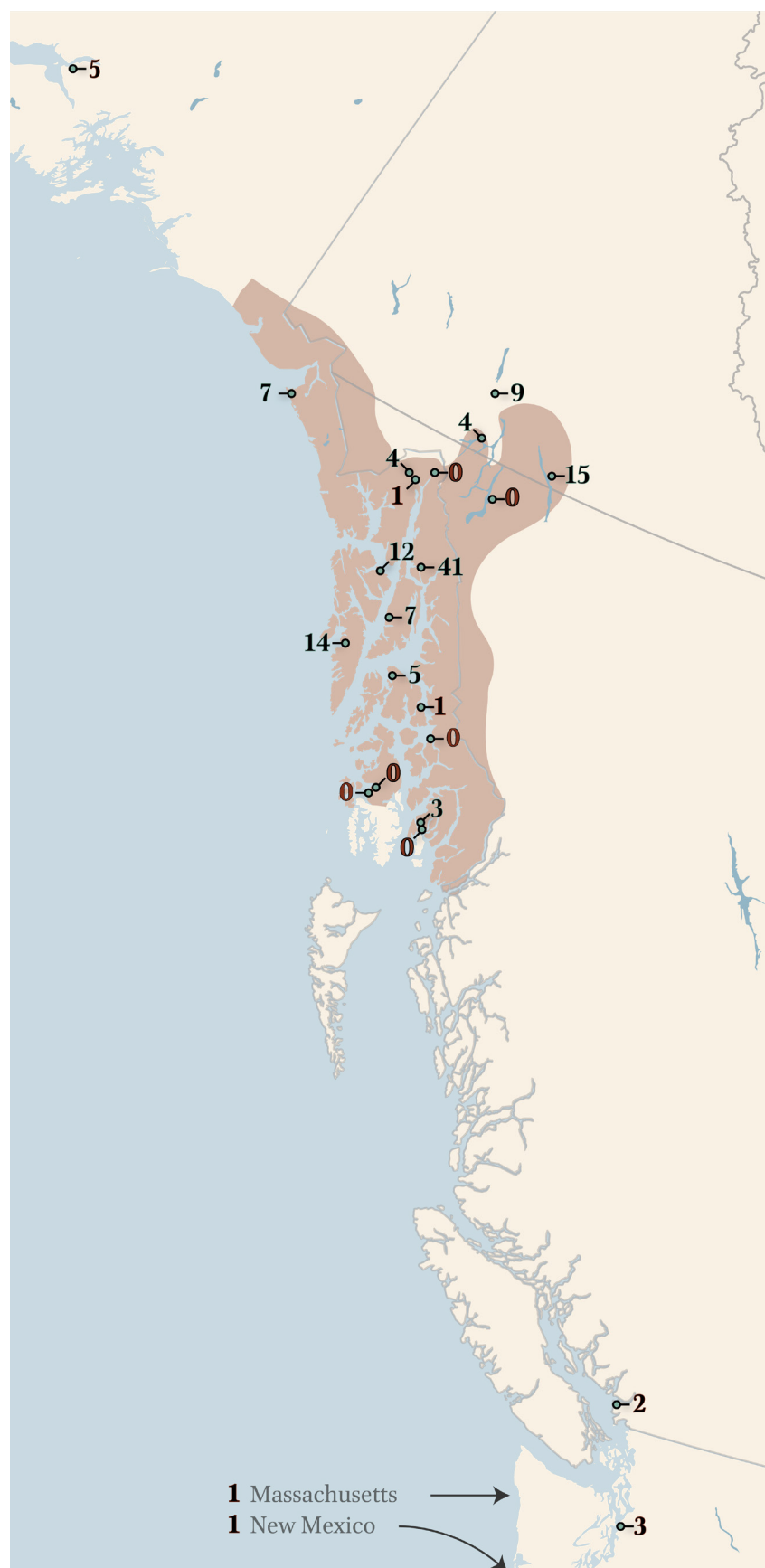


Figure 4: Estimated Number of Speakers and their location



working with their living elders, and with the documented inheritance of the past.<sup>12</sup>

But even with these findings, the death of Tlingit is not a foregone conclusion. The beauty of living in the now is that the future is up to those currently working in the language. There is a dedicated group of second language speakers who are now teaching, and they combine with the small collection of middle-aged birth speakers and the majority of the speakers, who are our sacred elders, and together they fight for our language on a daily basis by listening, speaking, teaching, and learning. For the past five years a grassroots project started that worked with language programs, teachers, advocates, and cultural leaders to estimate the number of remaining birth speakers and second-language speakers by location, and the results are shown on the opposite page.

### **1.7 The Future of the Tlingit Language**

For the first time in over fifty years, children are now being raised with the language, and those children are expected to understand the language at all levels and to speak it as well. Enrollments in language classes have steadily risen over the past five years, and new publications are making the language more digestible in terms of grammar and syntax. This next decade will determine what kind of Tlingit language survives in the future. Most of the living speakers are in their late seventies or older, so things will continue to turn over to a new generation of learners and speakers.

Three years ago I was asked to give the keynote address at the Tribal Assembly of the Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), a regional Tribe that provides Tribal government services for all Tlingit people and Alaskan Haida. In that speech I proposed several things: starting a language department at CCTHITA, establishing official language status for Alaska Native languages, developing an immersion school, and giving greater benefits to speakers and learners of our languages. In 2014 the language program was started through a Tribal resolution, and during an intense political process that culminated with a 16 hour sit in at the Capital, Alaska now recognizes its 20 Alaska Native languages as official languages of the state in addition to English, which was already recognized.

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<sup>12</sup> Dauenhauer, Nora Marks and Richard Dauenhauer. *Haa Shuka: Tlingit Oral Narratives*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981, x–xi.



Policy is only a framework, though. With official status, the next step for CCTHITA and other Alaska Native languages should be to create language nests and immersion schools that educate our children entirely in our language. In reviewing the literature on language revitalization, one trend tends to emerge for languages that have successfully revitalized or stabilized their language: they took control of their education systems and implemented immersion education from preschool through the doctorate level if possible (P-20), or at least through elementary school (P-6). Education systems in Alaska fail Indigenous people on a regular basis. In western Alaska, educators have commented that only half of the Alaska Native males survive to age thirty, meaning half of them die before reaching thirty years old. Suicide is the leading cause of death among Alaska Native youth and Alaska Natives commit suicide at the highest rate in the nation.<sup>13</sup> The graduation rate of Alaska Native youth is 51%.<sup>14</sup> But when we look at statistics like these, and the number of speakers, we have to see it as a challenge and a call to take control of our children's future by managing education and fighting for our languages at all costs. Indigenous identity and modes of thought are deeply embedded in Indigenous languages, and studies that are referenced in this dissertation show improvements in physical health and academic performance when Indigenous languages are the medium through which education is delivered.

In order to begin creating equity in these areas of disparity, Indigenous languages must be revitalized. Places of power and use must be created and language continuity movements must have the support of individuals, families, institutions, and governments. Language is sovereignty. Language is identity. Language is the way to succeed. Language is the way to survive.

Our elders who have fought their whole lives to keep the language alive and going, who understand how much love and power is in our languages, they will rejoice in knowing that we took the right steps and stood together in unity for our languages. When you close your eyes and see the landscape that is the home for the éil'ká Lingít, the rigid mountains emerging from the ocean, think about this. One of our master speakers, Daanaawáak Austin Hammond, used to refer to our language

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<sup>13</sup> Hagan, Kyla and Ellen Provost. *Alaska Native Health Status Report*. Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium: Alaska Native Epidemiology Center, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> "Statistics on Native Students." *National Indian Education Association*. nd. Retrieved at <http://www.niea.org/Research/Statistics.aspx>.

with a fitting metaphor. He would tell his audience, often his nephews or grandchildren, to look up at the mountainsides. You might wonder how the trees can grow up there, where the rocks are so steep and the terrain unforgiving. He explained that below the surface the roots are holding on to each other. They keep each other from falling off. That is how our language is, he would say. That is how our culture is, we keep each other there.

There are currently language teachers at all levels of education, and language is being taught and used with children from Carcross, Teslin, Sitka, Juneau, Yakutat, Hoonah, and Wrangell. There are master-apprentice programs in Juneau, Yakutat, and Sitka, and there is at least one fluent speaker in 15 communities. Many language classes at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) are broadcast and archived on YouTube so anyone with an Internet connection has access to the classes. The dictionaries, workbooks, and grammars that have been made in the past decade explain the language in a clearer way because of continual breakthroughs in documenting and teaching the language made by birth speakers and linguists. These breakthroughs are possible only because of the wonderful work that has been done by birth speakers, teachers, and linguists over the past fifty years.

Advocates of languages who have taken control of education—such as Hawaiian and Māori—have demonstrated success by embracing goals of intergenerational transmission and wide use. Families should talk to each other in the language, and encourage everyone to talk to children in the language. In the summer of 2014 I was in Yakutat and spent time with 6 bilingual Tlingit children. Their language skills and exposure varied, but each of them knew more at their age than most other Tlingit people or people living on Lingít Aaní. When we raise children in our languages, the complexities are lessened and we are no longer language teachers, but are instead Tlingit people living with the Tlingit language. Both students and speakers of the language need to commit to staying in the language more.

Beyond the concepts and the initiatives, language must be mended with its people. Tlingit needs solidarity. My experience with language learning, advocacy, planning, and teaching, has led me to understand that criticism and divisions are too strong and too common and prevent the language from rising up. Most learners do not speak the language, but instead respond in English or wait silently

for the conversation to switch over. But those things are going to change.

The story of Tlingit is one of a great journey and a greater return. We are at the point where we are readying ourselves to load the canoe with everything we have and come home. For some that means moving back to Lingít Aaní. For others it means listening to the language more, and for many it means breaking the barriers and speaking. Our grandparents are in the room, where they have been invited. They are leaning forward, anxious for what you will tell them. We have heard time and time again, haa dachx̣ánx̣'í sáani x̣'atulitseen, we cherish our little grandchildren. Your voice is spirit medicine. Your time is our greatest ally. Your love for yourself and your people is real.

Listen. Speak. Listen. Speak.

*ḳaa seeya.áx̣ch ágé?*



# 2

## Oppression and Cultural Genocide Among the Tlingit

Eeshandéin Yoo Haa Kawashóo Yá Haa Yoo X'atángi Hél Kaa Tuwáa Wushgóo

*We Suffered When People Did Not Want Our Language*

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Hu áwé yéi yanakéijin  
du xánt uwakuxu káa  
«yaanáx x'wán  
haanaanáx.»  
I yeeḡ kawdliyaas' i aat tlein.  
Asaxánin áwé  
du xooní yádi.  
Yéi áwé,  
yéi áwé, yee yakkwasaáa yeedát,  
haat kayeeyteení ldakát,  
ax sání hás,  
ax aat hás.  
Yóo áwé yee yakkwasaáa.  
L aa yee xwlisaagi yé  
yee ya.áakx áwé shwudliyéx  
yee aat tléin  
ka yee sání  
Hinkwéix'.  
– Gooch Éesh

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He was the one who used to say  
to someone coming to him by canoe,  
“please come this way,  
come closer.”  
Your great paternal aunt has made a lap for you.  
She used to love  
the children of her relatives.  
This is all,  
this is all i will say to you now,  
now that you have all arrived here,  
my paternal uncles,  
my paternal aunts.  
That is what i will say to you.  
your great paternal aunt,  
has transformed herself  
into a place where you can rest,  
and your paternal uncle  
Hinkwéix'.  
– Johnny C. Jackson, Kaaach.ádi <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson, Johnny, in *Haa Tuwunáagu Yís*, Ed. Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer. 163–164.

## 2.1 The Need to Document Child Torture and Humiliation

The first time I met linguist and Indigenous language advocate Michael Krauss was in 2013 at the 3rd International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (ICLDC) in Honolulu. Dzéiwsh James Crippen and I were there to present on fiat in the Tlingit language, because we had been enjoying a rather organic process of coming to consensus on how the language community would adopt new words and adapt new writing methods so the language could be used in texts, social media, messaging interfaces, and email on a regular basis without losing diacritical markings. Tlingit language groups were emerging on Facebook and were encouraging regular use, inquisition, and learning of the language to large audiences, and many of the participants might not have access to fluent speakers.

Dzéiwsh pointed out Michael Krauss and I mentioned that I would love to meet him after studying his work, primarily his advocacy of Indigenous language awareness and action. In the course of our conversation, he brought up a project that he noticed was desperately needed. Much of the suffering of Indigenous people with regard to their language was an untold story, known within closed circles but alluded to in some publications and other projects. He knew of the Replogle that documented experimental chemical tortures by teachers in the early 1900s who wanted to stop the children from speaking their language.

He said he knew there were things out there just as bad or worse, and that they needed to be documented from those who experienced the suffering and not just those who were the perpetrators. I recall his passion when he said there were people still alive who experienced these things and we need them to tell their story—in their own language if we could—otherwise it becomes unbelievable and capable of being glossed over or ignored.

Many elders have shared stories over the years. A panel of fluent elders visited a Beginning Tlingit classroom on October 11, 2012.<sup>2</sup> One of those speakers was Jigéit Tláa Irene Cadiente, an elder from the Teikweidí clan of Angoon. She talked about her experiences in the Pius X Mission Catholic School in Skagway, Alaska as a child. When she spoke Tlingit, the nuns of the school would beat her hands with

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<sup>2</sup> Cadiente, Jigéit Tláa Irene, in “Tlingit Ceremony in UAS Elementary Tlingit Class (clip 3).” *YouTube*. Oct 12, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2oCeQYBHAA>.



Figure 5: Tlingit Speakers Visit a Language Class  
from Left: Kíngestí David Katzeek, Misty Picaro, Jigéit Tlaa Irene Cadiente, Yaxdulákt' Lillian Austin · photo by Cody Dennis

rulers. Jigéit Tlaa shared this because she wanted students to understand what some of the elders had been through in school, and how scary it was to be alone and have teachers and religious leaders use violence against you as a child for speaking your language.

In November 2013, hundreds gathered in Juneau for the *Sharing Our Knowledge: A Conference of Tlingit Tribes & Clans* and the theme was Our Language—Haa Yoo X̱atángi Haa Kusteeyíx Sitee (Our Language Is Our Way of Life). One of the keynote speakers was Gax̱daakashú Joe Hotch, a Kaagwaantaan clan leader from Klukwan.<sup>3</sup> He mentioned during the opening remarks of the conference that when he was a child winters were much colder in Southeast Alaska. There was a young man who was speaking his Indigenous language at Wrangell Institute, a boarding school for Alaska Native children. It was winter and he was forced to go outside and put his tongue on a metal flagpole. This follows a common theme with the types of punishments that were dealt out for

<sup>3</sup> Hotch, Góoxdashús Joe, et al. “2013 (02.3) — Language Panel.” 2013 Clan Conference. *YouTube*. Nov 27, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZCvMqHnsy8>.



speaking an Indigenous language in a school at that time. There was often severe punishment and accompanying public humiliation.

Two other narratives that exist involve being sent to a mission school at two years old. An elder recalled not knowing why she was being put into a shower of ice cold water. After some time she realized it was because she was speaking the Tlingit language. She laughed at the irony of not knowing her language now. Another story involves a child put into a bathtub full of ice and beaten with rubber hoses by nuns. These narratives are important because they reveal a dark truth that many people are currently unwilling to face: a violent attempted genocide occurred in Indigenous America and children experienced the brunt of the force, often without protection from their families.

Narratives of these abuses—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and sexual—have emerged in the public sphere in Canada because of the work of the Truth & Reconciliation<sup>4</sup> activities that seek to document these tragedies and seek modern-day remedies for the horrors of the past. There are very few museums and monuments to what happened in this era, and it is a topic rarely brought up in public educational systems. The goal of exploring it in this text is to show that these traumas create a recurring nightmare of abuse, destroyed self-worth of individuals and collectives, and play a massive role in the ongoing death of Indigenous languages and ways of life.

After a screening of the film *Haa Yoo X'atángi Káx Kulagaawú: Language Warriors—The Life and Work of Nora & Richard Dauenhauer* at the University of Alaska Southeast, L'uknaḡ.ádi clan leader and fluent speaker L'éiw Tu.éesh Herman Davis stood up to give a response. He asked over and over: why are we having to do this ourselves? We did not do this to our languages. Where are the people who did? How come they are not helping us. The state and federal governments should have to pay. The churches should have to pay.

When our elders are saying this, they are not talking about a lawsuit or trying to financially injure an organization. Their thoughts are coming from a Tlingit perspective: when people do something wrong then they have to fix it. If they do not, then the burden to do so falls to future generations

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4 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was a mandate that was part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. It was created to document what happened in Indian Residential Schools through review of historic records and collection of public testimony, and then to create dialogue and proposed reconciliation methodologies. More information can be found at [nctr.ca](http://nctr.ca)



descended from the perpetrators. While the government and religious organizations that perpetrated crimes against Indigenous languages are not clans, they are being held to the same cultural standards. This is not so different from modern American culture, where if someone breaks something—like a window at a downtown store—they are expected to pay for it. The concept introduced here is a *social deficit* and a *cultural deficit* that are owed by the entities who not only allowed attempted genocide to occur, but were active participants and architects in the attempted mass murder of language and cultures through violent and cruel attacks on the most vulnerable part of a population: its children.

The impacts of a church-governed Alaska territory cannot be overstated, as most early missionaries were driven by the fallacy that Indigenous languages were evil or simplistic and should be replaced with English and Euroamerican lifestyles. Much of this leaves a lasting imprint today, as pointed out by Nora and Richard Dauenhauer: “Most Christians would consider it absurd to suggest that God does not like Hebrew or Greek, but many are convinced (or at least afraid) that God does not like Haida or Tlingit.”<sup>5</sup> Elders tell stories of childhood abuses by teachers and missionaries: picked up and shaken by their hair, placed into icy cold showers, placed in tubs of ice and beaten with garden hoses, forced to put their tongues onto metal flagpoles in the cold winter, and being hit on the hands with rulers and on the ears with a cupped hand. This was also documented by some missionaries, as in the following passage:

... we required them to speak nothing but English except by permission; but they often would get into the washroom or in the wood shed, and having set a watch, they would indulge in a good Indian talk. A few cases of this kind, and we applied a heroic remedy to stop it. We obtained a bottle of myrrh and capsicum: myrrh is bitter as gall and capsicum hot like fire. We prepared a little sponge; saturated it with this solution, and everyone that talked Indian had his mouth washed to take away the taint of the Indian language! One application usually was sufficient; but one or two cases had to receive a second application. From that time on,

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5 Dauenhauer, Nora Marks and Richard Dauenhauer. “Technical, emotional, and ideological issues in reversing language shift: examples from Southeast Alaska.” *Endangered Languages: Language Loss and Community Response*. Ed. Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley. New York: Cambridge, 1998, 64.

progress in their studies was almost doubly rapid, for they dared not talk their own language.<sup>6</sup> The result now is this: Alaska is a dying zone, and few people are aware of it, much less committed to creating significant change. Gradual changes come in the introduction of optional language programs in local schools, and in the activities of statewide organizations committed to language preservation, but they are not doing nearly enough to create the systemic changes needed to facilitate language revitalization. These changes must come at the foundational levels of what makes us a society, and part of that comes in acknowledging that the American genocide of Indigenous people was deliberate and has nearly achieved its desired outcome: the death of Alaska Native languages and the complete assimilation of the people.

As Indigenous languages seek to rise up to a place of continuity and safety, these histories will have to be unearthed and dealt with by all those who are connected to them. Both *Lingít Tundatáani* (the Tlingit thought world) and modern psychological findings show that if you do not reconcile the past in ways that allow people to move on, then you permit and orchestrate cycles of violence and trauma that remain embedded in populations and communities. Compounding this is the generations who walked away from the language and culture by choosing to stop speaking it and teaching it to the children. This was a decision that nearly all Tlingit families made, and the narratives within those decisions and following them have a different but equally powerful set of traumas that inflicted wounds and created disjunctures so substantial in families, clans, communities, and individuals, that a simple mispronunciation or failure to recall the grammar of the language can feel like complete and total failure at every one of those levels.

The reconciliation of historical traumas is an important step for any language revitalization movement. As more research becomes available that looks at the cyclical nature of personal and collective traumas and their persistence, Indigenous change agents should seek to employ a wide variety of effective methods that look directly at historical and current traumas and then implement a variety of activities to end cycles of violence and oppression.

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6 Replogle, Charles. *Among the Indians of Alaska*. London: Headley Brothers, 1904. Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 1068-1072

## 2.2 The Narrative of Shaksháani Marge Dutson

Shaksháani Marge Dutson is a wonderful and kind Ishkeetaan Elder, and I am blessed to have opportunities to work with her and Kaaxwaan Éesh George Davis, who is T'akdeintaan. The types of work that we do is funded by Goldbelt Heritage Foundation, Tlingit Readers Incorporated, Juneau Tlingit & Haida Community Council, and Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. We create children's books, translate narratives recorded in Tlingit country over the years—including Raven stories that were told by elders in the 1960s, and translate modern children's readers and stories to create curriculum that supports language learning and use.

During some of these sessions, Shaksháani shared stories of her youth and what it was like growing up with and without the Tlingit language. Her introduction to American school systems was particularly harsh, and I asked her if she would be willing to share it in Tlingit. This was such a sensitive topic that it took two attempts for the recording. The first time she had an opening sentence in Tlingit that was commanding and powerful. The sentence is presented here for analysis:

*Hél yee tooch ulchéeshik áx xat uwawádi yé kúnáx áyú eeshandéin yoo haa kaawashóo yá haa yoo x'atángi hél kaa tuwáa wushgóo.<sup>7</sup>*

After the recording was finished she asked me about this sentence, and I could only grasp at parts of it. After her explanation and translation, I made sure to write it down and look at it later. She said that she feels so emotional about the topic that she needed the right sentence to start the narrative. To understand its complexity and power, we will analyze it using Tlingit linguistics, which helps learners construct language by learning how to take it apart and see how it fits together. These techniques are useful to be able to construct complex Tlingit grammar, but must not be over-emphasized or else learners become book-dependent. Also, exercises like this must be complimented with opportunities to hear and create whole language in environments where translation is not needed. Looking this sentence by sentence, we have the following:

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7 Dutson, Marge. "Sháax' Sáani — Haa Léelk'u Has Du Yoo X'atángi (Tlingit Language)." *YouTube*. Dec 13, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2nveIwftjE>.

Hél yee tooch ulchéeshik	It's impossible for you to feel
áx̣ xat uwawádi yé	the place I grew up
kúnáx̣ áyú	very much then
eeshandéin yoo haa kawaashóo	we suffered
yá haa yoo x̣'atángi	when our language
héḷ kaa tuwáa wushgóo	people didn't want it

When translating Tlingit, there are always questions about word order and how to present the logic of the language. In order to avoid sounding different or creating confusion, many translators create sentences that are more the English equivalent rather than a word-for-word literal translation. There are cases when both of these techniques are useful for language learners and for those who are seeking to appreciate the Tlingit language and thought world. A next step in linguistic analysis would be segmenting and glossing, where the language is separated into individual components and then the meaning of those components is analyzed. This helps with showing how complex grammar and concepts work in their individual parts. These exercises can be jarring for some speakers and learners because the small components often have their sound and meaning changed by what is around them, but it is helpful for learners to see how the language is functioning in the mind of a fluent speaker. In a segment and gloss exercise, hyphens are inserted in the Tlingit to show individual parts and then the plus symbol is used between words. In the gloss below, periods are used between word parts and additional information is presented in parentheses. Items in brackets show that the item has grammatical function instead of actual meaning. The method used here was adapted from the one proposed by James Crippen, and the point is to show how complex concepts and grammar are functioning in regards to how they appear and how they influence other parts of speech.

Here is a segment and gloss of this first sentence by Shaksháani:

SEGMENT & GLOSS				TRANSLATION
Hél +	yee +	tóo-ch +	u-la-√chéesh-iḳ	It's impossible for you to feel
not +	you-all's-(2p.p) +	inside.instrumental +	irr.cl-(-d,l,-i).√possible.prohibitive	
áx̣ +	xat +	ÿu-ÿa-√wát-i +	yé	the place I grew up
my-(1s.p) +	me-(1s.O) +	pfv.cl-(-d,Ø,+i).√grow/raise.[relational] +	place	

SEGMENT & GLOSS		TRANSLATION
kúnáx + á-yú		
really +	[focus].there-(over yonder)	very much then
eesháan-déin + yoo + haa + ka-ŷa-√shóo		
pitiful.[adverb] +	to/fro + we-(1p.O) + hsf.cl-(-d,Ø,+i).√suffer	we suffered
yá + haa + yoo + x'a-Ø-√tán-k-i		
here-(right here) +	our-(1p.p) + to/fro + mouth.cl-(-d,Ø,-i).√communicate.[repetitive].[relational]	when our language
hél + kaa + tu-ŷá + ŷu-sha-√góo		
not + someone's-(4h.p) + inside.face +	pfv.cl-(-d,sh,-i)	people didn't want it

It took Mrs. Dutson a long time to come to a point where she could tell this story, because it contains sensitive information and comes from a place of deep personal and historical trauma. As a speaker of the language in her nineties, she can look back at some of these moments as definitive for her life journey and for the general decline of the Tlingit language. Many learners and speakers look at the time when it was almost universally decided to stop speaking Tlingit to younger generations, and that is discussed in these narratives as well as atrocities committed by a teacher upon a five year old girl in her first days at school. It took two attempts share her truth, with the first one recorded in December of 2013 and the second in May 2014.<sup>8</sup>

Narratives like this are important to understand the complex combination of factors that have been leading the Tlingit language to a place of dying and loss. This is compounded with the fact that nearly all Tlingit families walked away from their language in the early parts of the 20th century. This abandonment combines with direct punishments for speaking and established systems of racism and superiority to create death zones for Indigenous languages. In order to turn things around, the traumas must be identified and rooted out in order to operate in a place where there is not so much on the line. If people feel like it is “speak or the language dies” then there might be too much pressure added to a situation where the language is already difficult to learn and use. If we can address these traumas and find ways to *overcome* them instead of *reliving* them—even for generations who were not there and do not know of them directly, then we dramatically increase the chances of language

8 Dutson, Marge. “Sháax' Sáani — Yoo X'atángi Yís (Tlingit Language) 5/5/2014.” *YouTube*. May 6, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoVODc2PmOw>.

learning, use, power, and therefore revitalization.

With these concepts in mind, and thinking about the narrative framing and the courage to tell these stories, it is time to turn to the texts themselves. The two narratives are presented here to show how a speaker might convey life traumas regarding language. They were both recorded at the home of Shaksháani Marge Dutson, and transcription & translation assistance were provided by Naawéiyaa Austin Tagaban. She noted that there are things that might put her parents in a negative light, and she balances that with the love they showed. It was a complicated time filled with human suffering that is hard to fathom today except in places of civil wars and cultural genocide. Mrs. Dutson's compassion does not extend to the teacher, however, because there was no love to balance the teacher's violence and no conflict about being an agent of genocide in a time of great terror.

### The First Narrative of Shaksháani Marge Dutson

Hél yee tooch ulchéeshik	It's impossible for you to feel	
áx̱ xat uwawádi yé	the place I grew up	
kúnáx̱ áyú	very much then	
eeshandéin yoo haa kaawashóo	we suffered	
yá haa yoo x̱'atángi	when our language	5
hél kaa tuwáa wushgóo.	people didn't want it.	
Yá héexwgu kaa yoo x̱'atángi áyá.	This language of witchcraft.	
Áx' áyá haa yéi wduwajee.	This is how people thought of it then.	
Ách áwé	Because of that	
ldakát yéidei eeshandéin yoo haa kawashóo.	we suffered everywhere.	10
X̱át kayáanáx̱.	It was too much for me.	
Ka ax̱ tláa ka ax̱ éesh, hél ...	And my mother and my father didn't ...	
ax̱ éesh ku.aa tle dleit kaa yoo x̱'atángi awsikóo	my father, that is, spoke only a little bit of English.	
ch'a yéi gugéink'.		
Ax̱ tláa ku.aa tléik'	My mother, however, didn't.	
Ách áwé,	Because of that,	15
wé sgóonwaanx̱ x̱át nastee áwé,	when I would become a student at school,	
tle tlél ax̱ x̱'éidáx̱ yú,	not from my mouth, then,	
hél ax̱ x̱'éidáx̱ yoo s awoot	they didn't want our words	

hél		
hás du tuwáa wushgóo yá haa yoo x̣'atángi.	they didn't want us to speak our language.	20
a kaadé áyá kúnáx̄	it was to this, very much,	
«íli» yoo haa daayawduwaká.	we were told “don't!”.	
Yá haa k̄usteyí ku.aa x̣'aadé wooxéex yaa aadéi	Our way of life, at that time, began to get lost with	
yoo s haa kawlishóowu yé,	the way they made us suffer,	
yá Government	The Government	25
k̄a yá Catholic Church	and the Catholic Church	
Tle kúnáx̄ áyú hél haa een hás wooshk'é.	At that time they were so horrible to us.	
Yeedát áwé tsaatguwéigaa áwé tsá dáanaa	And now finally first, money	
kéi s ateech	they pick it up all the time	
haa kagéi yís.	for us.	30
Haa ee at nagilatóowut.	Let it be for teaching us.	
Tsaatguyéigaa tsá.	Finally, at first.	
Yeedát áwé ax̄ toowú waanganeens néekw nuch:	Now, sometimes I feel so sad about it:	
yáa	this	
ax̄ kín wuwáadi ku.oo	the people I grew up with	35
ax̄ léelk'w yoo duwasáakw	my grandparents were called	
k̄a ...	and ...	
yóonáx̄ aanáx̄ ax̄ léelk'w tsú koowdzitee k̄aa	that through which my grandparents were born into	
yáanáx̄ aanáx̄.	was overpowering people as well.	
Waanganeens áwé ch'u tlé kut x̄at gasgitch.	Sometimes I am always forgetting.	
X̄aach ku.aa ch'as ax̄ léelk'w áwé s x̄wasikóo.	I, however, only knew my grandparents.	40
Ax̄ tláa	My mother	
k̄a ax̄ éesh	and my father	
eeshandéin yoo kawdudlishóo s ágé?	how much suffering was there?	
«Tlél haa x̄'eidéi yoo kei s ax̄.juk!»	“Don't listen to us!”	
Ch'a yóonáx̄ aadé nagú.	Just go over there.	45
Sh kagax̄toolnéek áyá.	Telling stories, they were.	
A kaadé áhé hél x̄wasakú haa k̄usteyí.	Because of this I don't know our culture.	
Yá haa yoo x̣'atángi k̄wa hél jixwanaak̄.	I didn't quit on our language, though.	
K̄ushtuyáx̄ wáa sá yoo s ...	it doesn't matter how they ...	
Yú tléix yatée,	This one time,	50

á kaa ée at wultóowu	this teacher	
haa ée at latóowu shaawát.	Our teacher was a woman.	
Kúnáx áwé hél chaa x'éiwatee.	She was very mean and ill-tempered.	
Hél keetáanáx	It was unmannerly	
yoo xat usnéek.	the way she would treat me.	55
Ch'a yéisu tleidooshu táakw <sub>x</sub> xat satee áwé, kúnáx	I was six years old at that time,	
eeshandéin yoo xát kawlishóo.	when she really tormented me.	
Tle ách áyá ax toox' yéi woonee:	Because of this, it happens inside me:	
«hél ax jeedáx gaxyitee ax yoo x'atángi.»	“you will not take my language away from me.”	
Kushtuyáx wáa sá eeshandéin yaa xat kanashéin,	No matter how much I suffer,	60
kushtuyáx goo sá át haa jeewaháa,	no matter where I might be sent,	
ax yóo x'atángi xá,	my language, you see,	
ax káx yóo x'akkwatáan.	I will be speaking on it.	
Yú áyá ax toowú wootee yeisú.	That was how I still felt.	
Tleidooshú taakw <sub>x</sub> xat nastí,	When I became six years old,	65
ax tláa ka ax éesh kúnáx xat yawajee has xat yawajee ch'u daxnáx háa.	my mother and my father really thought I would be that way, they suspected I would, both of them did.	
«Yú áyá s yak'éí.	“You are good.	
Ch'a ee yáx iteeyí káa	The people who are like you	
hél has du yaadéi yakgeesdaayí.	you are not going to observe them.	
Tle kúnáx at yáax' awoonéi een áyá s du yá yánde kgeeháan.	Then with respect you are going to stand and face them.	70
Eeshandéin a daat tootée i too yéi natee!»	Take pity on them!”	
Hél ushk'éí	It is terrible	
yáa hél ch'a x'éití.	to be so mean.	
Wa.é kúdáx áwé yaa x'ayasatk	You are talking too fast.	
sh toodáx nees.há	erase it from inside yourself.	75
Aaa. Yak'éí	Yes. Good.	
Wáa sá has du x'éigaa xat nateech.	I always did it however they told me.	
Ch'a wáa at sáwé haa nasneech áwé dleit kaa adátx'i	They are just doing all kinds of things to us, the white children,	
tlé has du kaa jee ayatuda.átch.	then we always turned away from what people had.	80



Hél a saayí awudlaak has.	They never obtained a name, them.	
Clara Kinch, Aandóol yoo duwasáakw lingít x'éináx.	Clara Kinch, she is called Aandóol in Tlingit.	
kúnáx ku.aa a káx yán uwahán.	she always really fought for it.	
Ch'a wáa sá yawdudzikaa dleit kaa ítx jidagóot.	However they insulted her, she would always attack.	
Kúnáx wulitseen	She was very strong.	85
Yá Byron Mallot has du xooní áyá.	These are friends of Byron Mallott.	
Kúnáx,	Really,	
ax een áa has áyá	my family	
tsú ax éesh ka has du éesh	my father and their father.	
Wooch kik'í yán yátx'ix has wudzitée	They were siblings as children.	90
ach áwé tla_x yéi wooch wutudzi_xán áwé.	that is why we loved each other very much.	
Ax éesh has du een kaneek nuch ka has du éesh:	My father would always tell them and their father:	
yan káx' i keek' ka i shát_x áwé.	this is your younger sister and your older sister.	
Hél... tlél wáa sá s daayee_kaak.	Don't talk any old way.	
Há'! Adóoch sá	Oh my! Whoever	95
wáa sá wududzinéi	is insulting	
wé yeewháanch tsú	it is always all of you	
hél áyá yánde gaxyinaak.	you are not going to stand up for it.	
Yeeysikóo dleit kaa adát_x'i kúnáx yee shik'áan.	You all know those white children hate you so much.	
Hél ku.aa s awuskúch uháanch tsú kúnáx has tushik'áan.	They don't know, though, that we really hate them too.	100
Ch'a wáa sá haa wdudzinee tlél s du yáx jiw_tuda. aat.	No matter how much they insult us, we did not attack them.	
Tléix'dahéen áwé,	One time,	
té,	a rock,	
wé dleit een akawachux.	it was packed into a snowball.	
Aagaa áwé tsú ax shakéet akaawgix'.	And then it was thrown against the top of my head.	105
Hó, tlá_x daa yaa kugatch.	My, it knocked me unconscious.	
Ásíwé	I guess	
awsiteen	she saw it	
tlé ayawsiná_k wé at k'átsk'u.	and then she chased those children.	
Yán ash awlixút' aagaa tsú yíndei ayagwált.	She dragged them down and then beat them down.	110

Kúnáx tudaléich,	We are really yelling,	
aadé yaa l kutujigéiyi yé.	this way we were being foolish.	
Há'! Haa yagaxdujée hél yoo haa tootí.	Oh my! We aren't thinking about how we are going to be punished.	
Ch'a haa tláa ka haa éesh,	Just our mother and our father,	
aadóo s haa shakoojéix'i,	whoever was instructing us,	115
ch'a s yéi.	just those ones.	
Uháan ku.aa ch'a goot yéidei kutoodzitee.	We though, we were being different.	
Yá haa yoo x'atángi káx áyá i een kaxlanéek	Yes, I am telling it to you in our language.	
Áx' á haa wdudjik'áan.	We were hated at that time.	
Tle kúnáx keijínnáx haa yatee.	We really are five of us.	120
Kúnáx k'idein yoo x'atoowli.átk	We talked very well and very carefully.	
Yá Byron Mallott du xoonx'i.	And the friends of Byron Mallott.	
Ldakát has áyá	All of them	
ax éesh een	with my father	
tle wooch.een haa wudzitee.	we were always together at that time.	125
Kúnáx has	Very much,	
eeshandéin has du daa xat tuwatee,	I think about the way they suffered,	
ka has xasixán ch'a yeedádi dé.	and I love them to this very day.	
Ax náx has kawdik'éet'.	They died off from me.	
Yeedát áwé	Now,	130
wé	that	
Helen	Helen	
eeshandéin yaa kanashéin yoo kdunéek.	people talk about her suffering.	
Hú tsú ax keek'átsk'u.	She, too, I grew up with her.	
Ldakát uháan áyá wooch.een haa wdzitee, yá	All of us were together,	135
haa tláa een ka haa éesh,	with my mother and my father,	
tlé wooshx has kawdzitee.	we were together.	
A kaadéi áyá,	On this,	
tlé tléix' yateeyi family-x haa wsitee.	at that time we were one family.	
Yá	These	140
Catholic aayí,	Catholic people,	
wé mission-dé haa jeewaháa ax shátx een.	sent me to the mission with my older sister.	

Hél ḳaa toowáa ooshgú aḡ shátḡ	People didn't want my older sister	
aḡ x̣ánḡ goodí.	to come with me.	
Tle ḳúnáḡ	At that time, such awful	145
yaawduwajee.	punishment.	
Wutusikóo i kéek'ḡ has sateeyí,	We know your little sisters,	
háa wáa sá yoo s du ee yatee,	how much this is affecting them,	
tlél has du toowáa ushgóo tsú ch'a	that they just don't want you to also	
aḡ x̣ánt woogoodí.	go with her.	150
Ch'a du yáḡ woowaadí aax woodikín du naach	The ones who grew up like her all flew off,	
xat tsú ch'a aḡ guwáadi adátḡ'i	me too, all my kids are grown.	
eeshandéin yoo haa kawdudlishóo.	We were tormented.	
Hél áyá yánde kgeeháan wa.é.	You are not going to stand for it, you.	
Gwál eengwáalt een daa kageeháanch ch'a wa.é	Maybe if you are hit, you are going to stand up, just	155
tsú	you too.	
Aḡ tláa yéi daayaxaká.	This is what I tell my mother.	
Hél has du tuwáa ushgú Lingít x̣'éináḡ yoo	They didn't want us to speak Tlingit.	
x̣'atula.átgi.		
A kaadé áyá,	With this,	
ch'as dleit ḳaa adátḡ'i yáḡ yoo x̣'atula.ádi, ch'as ...	we just talked like white kids, just ...	
has haa daayaḡaa nooch:	they always told us to us:	160
«tlél aḡ tuwáa ushgú	"I don't want	
ch'a koogéiyi át x̣á sákḡ tle.»	things to become reckless."	
Has du toowú,	How they felt,	
hél k'idéin yeedát ayáḡ yoo x̣'ayatánk.	now I don't speak that well.	
Aadáḡ	From that	165
k'idéin yaa xat gawáat áwé yéi aḡ tuwatee.	I think I was raised well.	
K'é! Sh too ḳaltóow haa ḳusteeyí!	Goodness! Let me study our culture!	
Yak'éi shákdé k'idéin x̣wasikóo.	Good, maybe I know it well.	
Aḡ tláa káḡ x̣'awóos' nooch.	I always ask my mother.	
Aagáa áwé yéi xat yawsikaa:	And then she would tell me:	170
tlax̣ kúdáḡ áyá dleit sháaḡ yee wsitee.	you girls are way too much like white women.	
Dleit ḳaa	White man's	
tundatáani i jeewú gé?	thinking, is that what you have?	

A kaadé áhé hél xwasakú wáa sá i een sh  
kakwalknéek.

Yak'éiyi át kut yigéex'i

Waanganéens áwé,

kúnáx ax toowú néekw nooch.

Yá yées káa yeedát yaa nawát áa,

kúnáx áyú has

has awsikóo has du shagóon.

Xáach kwa kut xwaagéex'.

Áwé, waanganéens áwé has du yináade  
kuxwsaháaych wé

Government.

ka yá Catholic Church.

Tsaatguwéigaa áwé tsá a káa s gakéi.

Dáanaa tlein kut kei has anagíx'.

Wáanáx sáwé hél ch'a dleit káa ka Lingít  
yináanáx aanáx?

A ée at wudultóowu,

yeedát yá yées káa ax toowú néekw nooch.

Tlákwx yaa ndasháan át has na.átch, ká

hél shákdé

has toowú néekw nooch.

Tléix'dahéen áwé,

ax éesh

shkalneegí.

Yá

yisikóo shátk',

sháax'wsáani

paper dolls

Wáa sá.

Yan yéi xwisnée du x'éit xwasi.áx.

Ch'áak'w ku.aa

kaa kéilk'

On that, I don't know how I am going to tell it to you.

This wonderful thing that you have lost.

175

Sometimes,

I am always feeling so awfully sad.

These young people, the ones growing up,  
they really

know their ancestors.

180

Me, though, I lost it.

Then, sometimes then, I am always blaming them

the Government

and the Catholic Church.

Finally, let them pay on it.

185

They are losing big money.

Why not? Through the white side and the Tlingit side.

It is being taught,

now to the young people, I am always sad.

Keep going to the old ones, and

190

maybe they won't

always be sad.

One time,

my father's

story.

195

This

you know a young girl,

little old ladies,

paper dolls

How's that?

200

I had finished listening to him

Long ago, however,

a person's nephew

k̄aa káak jeedé ajeewunák̄ jinkaak,	would be turned over to a person's maternal uncle at ten,	
k̄aa yát.	a person's child.	205
Aagáa áwé	And then	
héen	water	
héende ana.átch.	people would go to the water.	
Héende aan yaa ganúkch.	Sitting in the water with it.	
Kúnáx̄	Really.	210
Kúnáx̄	Really	
has du toowúch	they wanted	
k'idéin yaa anaswéini áwé	the student	
yánde aan daak uhóowch.	to wade ashore with it.	
Áx' áya axíshdi nooch, daat een sá kwshé.	Here he would beat him, with something or other.	215
Hél x̄wasakú.	I don't know.	
Yisikóo,	You know,	
naaléi,	it is distant,	
áx' áa sh kalnik yé.	that place where stories were told.	
Hél x̄wasakú daat een sáwé duwaxísh.	I don't know what people were beaten with.	220
Ách áyá	Because of this	
áwé wooch kaanáx̄ wudu.aadi kúnáx̄ war k̄usteeyí.	when people came together wars really happened.	
Kúlagaaw.	War.	
Wooch.een kudulgaaw noojín.	People used to always fight with each other.	
Áyá k̄aa yátx'i,	Yes, children,	225
yá k̄aa.aa yátx'i	the male children	
hás áyá kúnáx̄ k̄aax̄ has wusitee.	it was them that became real men.	
<i>Real men.</i>	Real men.	
Dleit k̄áach yéi asáa.	That's what white people call it.	
<i>Real men.</i>	Real men.	230
<i>Real warriors.</i>	Real warriors.	
Wáa sá?	How's that?	

## The Second Narrative of Shaksháani Marge Dutson

X'unei Lance Twitchell (interviewer)

Gunalchéesh.	Thank you.	
Kúnáx sh tóogaa xaaditee	I am very grateful	
ách áwé	because	
i toowú wlitseen	you had inner strength	
shgóon tóonáx.	through school.	5
Xwasikóo aadé áyá	I know that	
hél tul.aan áyá shayadihéin koo at latéewu	they were not kind, many of the teachers	
ách áwé tlél kaa tuwáa ushgú haa yoo x'atángi.	because people did not want our language.	
Yá	This	
shatk'iyátsk'ux i sateeyídáx	from the time you were a young girl	10
ka ax tuwáa sigóo	and I want	
yeedát áyá	now	
—shayadihéini káax'w hél has du	—many people don't ...	
tlél has awuskú a daat	they don't know about it	
yee gaawú yá shgóon.	your time in school.	15
Shgóon tóox' áyá lidzee gaawú.	It was a difficult time in school.	
Gwál	Maybe	
ee jín áyá has akaawagwaal.	they hit you on your hands.	
Gwál	Maybe	
tlél ushk'é áyá	it was terrible	20
has du yéi jinéiyi,	the work they did,	
ách áwé	because	
has du tuwáa wsigóo has uwajági haa yoo x'atángi.	they wanted to kill our language.	
Tlél yeedát ku.aa.	Not now, though.	
Gwál haa een kananeek a daat,	Maybe tell us about it,	25
yá kusteeyí yá shgóon tóox'.	the life inside the school.	
Gunalchéesh.	Thank you.	

Shaksháani Marge Dutson

Tsaatguyéigaa wé tsá	At long last, only then
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a káa has haa jikéi, <i>government</i> .	they finally paid us, the government.	
Haa jeet has aawatée k̲wa ch'a gaa yatee a káa has haa jikéiyi.	They gave it to us, and it was good that they paid us.	30
Hóoch' xáhé	It's over, you see, that	
yéi nasék̲ át yáx yatee haa yoo x'atángi.	our language would be like smoke.	
Wáanganeins áwé ax̲ toowú natee nooch,	Sometimes I am always feeling that way,	
ax̲ toowú néekw nooch	I am always miserable	
a káa daak tookadatáanin	when I remember	35
aadé yoo s haa kawlishoowu yé.	how they tormented us.	
Tle kúnax̲ áwé tlél ushk'é.	Then it is really terrible.	
Xát káa yáanax̲,	It overpowers me,	
ax̲ tláa ka ax̲ éesh	my mother and my father	
<i>alcohol</i> tóot has kawasóos.	alcohol fell into them.	40
Át shákdéi áwé tlaṣ̲ hé tlél kaa yaa haa ...	It was perhaps, that ...	
hél kaa yáa haa ulkéiyin.	they didn't treasure us.	
L x̲wasikú áwé yáa xat yaawawát a ku.aa	I don't know, then I was growing up, though.	
Yá shux'wáa	The first time	
skóonx̲ x̲waagoot keijín	I went to school, five	45
táakw	years,	
tleidooshú táakw dé xat nawaadí.	six years old I was at that time.	
Aagaa xát áwé skóont x̲wagút.	And then, me, I went to school	
Dleit káa yoo x'atángi tlél k'idéin x̲washigóok aagáa	I did not know English very well, and then	
yá	this	50
ax̲ shát̲ich ku.aa ax̲ éet wudisheejin.	my older sister used to help me.	
Hóoch ku.aa k'idéin yaa at naskwéi Dleit Káa yoo x'atángi.	She was really learning it well, English.	
Wé	That	
shux'wáa at x̲wagoot kúnax̲ akux̲wdlixéitl'.	the first time I went there I was terrified.	
Ax̲ tláa ka ax̲ éesh hél ax̲ shát̲x̲	Not my mother, or father, or older sister	55
hél aadóo sá aadé.	no one went with.	
Áwé akulixéitl' tlein áa tlaṣ̲ ax̲ too yéi yatee.	I was filled with great terror.	
Hél wáa sá utí tle	It was okay, then	

kei naḡashát wé	I reached up	
haa ee at latóowu aa.	to the one who was our teacher.	60
Aadé yoo ḡ'atánk,	She spoke,	
«hél wáa sá utí.	“it’s okay	
Yisikóo yées at k’átsku.»	You know these new children.”	
Ldakát at awe kei agashátch,	Always reaching up for everything,	
yéi áwé ḡat wootee.	this is how I was.	65
K'idéin kei naḡashát wé Dleit Káa yoo ḡ'atángi	I was really grasping the English language	
Yáa Lingít yoo ḡ'atángi ku.aa tlaḡ aḡ tóo yéi yatee	The Tlingit language, however, is what is really inside	
aḡ toowú yak'éi.	of me and is what I feel good about.	
Ch'a átḡ sitee áwé <i>I didn't need an interpreter</i>	It's just this, I didn't need an interpreter	
<i>from Tlingit to English.</i>	from Tlingit to English.	
<i>Very close to it.</i>	Very close to it.	70
Ch'a aḡ shátḡi aḡ ée at tultóowu ách áwé ch'a yéi	My older sister was just teaching me, and because of	
gugéink' a kín aḡ shátḡ.	this I was a little bit behind her.	
Hás áwé gé?	Was it them?	
Ash koolyát yisikóo <i>recess</i> yáḡ kádunéich.	You know, playing, at recess, it was always done.	
A yóoḡ haa kawduwanáa.	There we were ordered around.	
Áx' áwé	It was there	75
tlél	not ...	
ch'a <i>mistake</i> yáḡ wé Lingít ḡ'éináḡ yoo	just like a mistake, I would speak in Tlingit.	
ḡ'aḡwditaan.		
Áwé.	Well.	
Aḡ yáḡ shat'kátsk'uch	The little girls nearby	
kei ḡat kaawaník.	would tattle on me.	80
Wé	That	
haa ee at latóowu aa een akaneek,	teacher of ours would tell it,	
yéi ḡ'ayáká,	she would say,	
«tlákw áwé Lingít ḡ'éináḡ yoo ḡ'ayatánk wé	“you are always speaking in Tlingit	
ash katooyát yé.»	on the playground.”	85
Áwé ḡ'awsitíx'.	Yes, she interrogated.	
Tle aan wudlinéekw.	Then she made me upset with it.	
Yeedát woonáalḡ wé shaawát.	Now she was really rich, that woman.	



Wáanganeins ch'a du eedáx toowú néekw nooch yeedát.	Now and then, just from her I always feel sadness now.	
Wé teacher een xat kaneegí, tle kúnáx ligéi, Dleit Káach ayasáakw, <i>obese</i> .	That teacher that would talk about me, and she was really huge, in English this is called obese.	90
Kúnáx aax áwé sitee wé shaawát kúnáx awdlinét, ka ligéi, <i>about six feet tall</i> .	She really was this, that woman was really fat, and big, about six feet tall.	
Aaa, ax x'éit shawdigút.	Yes, she led me over there, closed-mouthed.	95
Tle ax shaxaawúch áwé kei xat seigútch.	Then she dragged me up by my hair.	
Kúnáx at ... xat shakayóok.	She really shook my head around violently.	
«Hél ax tuwáa ushgú Lingít yoo x'atángi! Yisikóo gé?»	“I don't want you speaking Tlingit! Do you know that?”	100
A kíknaax áwé ch'a ax satee áwé ax ax kei kawushxéen ax ludíx'.	In addition to this, it was just this, I fell down from there onto my back.	
Kaa een kaxaneegí yeedát uháan ku.aa tlél yéi haa wunéi. <i>No, I don't think so.</i>	I tell people now that us, though, we are not prepared.	105
Ldakát uháan eeshaandéin yoo haa kawashóo.	All of us we suffered terribly.	
Tle wé x'oos tlein, <i>yardstick</i> een kúnáx ax jín axíshht daxnáx, tliyaa kandaκάch ax jín.	Then that big foot, with a yardstick she really clubbed on both my hands, it swelled way up, my hands.	110
Ax lidíx' tsú yanéekw.	My back, too, it hurt.	
Hél du tógaa kawugei át ax ... át ax a dáa nayeí.	It is nothing to be proud of ... what she did to me.	
Wáa x'áant unoogú sá tlé du kát kawdinét.	How angry she was that she was just shaking.	115
A yoo tujíxi aagáa kushí át aan xat kgwajágu át.	She threw it out and looked for something to beat me with.	
Ch'a yeisú kujéili áwé gaade yaxwdihán.	Still when she was gathering them I ran away from her, out the door.	
Nalée, <i>about a half-mile</i> , yéi gú kunaaléi haa hídidáx.	It was far, about a half-mile, that is how far it is walking from our house.	

A yáanáx, <i>maybe one mile.</i>	It's more than that, maybe one mile.	120
Yéisú keijín táakw ƙa shoowúx ƙat sitee.	I was still five and a half years old.	
Ch'as aax sitee ƙúnáx dagáx.	Just coming from it, I was really crying.	
Neil ƙaxdagáax áwé ax éeshx ƙat x'awóos':	At home I was crying out and my father asked me:	
«wáa sáyá eewoonee?»	“what happened to you?”	
Hél aadé yoo x'akkwa—hél du eex x'axwataan.	I could talk—I didn't tell him.	125
Ch'as ax jín áwé du wakshiyeex' ixwsinee.	I just put my hands in front of his eyes.	
Wáa x'áant woonoogú sáwé ax éesh.	How furious he was, my father.	
Ch'as du s'áaxu áwé	Just, his hat	
sháax aawditee ƙa du kinaa.ádi,	he put it on his head, and put his coat on,	
aan áwé gáant wujixíx.	and with it ran outside.	130
Ax tláa,	My mother,	
ax tláach awsikóo aadé x'áant uwanúkch yé.	my mother knew the way he got angry.	
Ch'a géga Dleit Ƙáa x'éináx a eex	In vain, she said in English,	
«Frank! Frank! Sh toodax ƙaneesaa.»	“Frank! Frank! Relax off of it!”	
Yóo áwé daané ax tláa.	That is what my mother did.	135
Tle	When	
aa yagoodí yéix' áwé yaa nashíx ch'a du ítƙ yaa nxashíx.	he went out she ran with him and I ran after them.	
Tle héide kei ashuwaxích wé <i>school</i> , wé x'aháat.	Then here he went up and slammed the door at the school.	
Aadé x'áant uwanúgu yé oositeen wé shaawát tlein.	That big woman saw how mad he was.	
«Aaah!» yaa kandagáx.	“Aaah!” she cried out.	140
Ax éesh du éet yaa nashíx.	My father runs up to her.	
Ax éesh ƙu.aa,	My father, though,	
<i>five feet, eight inches, yéi gíwé kawligéi, maybe five-nine.</i>	five feet, eight inches, that is maybe how tall he was, maybe five-nine.	
Hú ƙu.aa <i>six feet.</i>	Her, however, six feet.	
A ƙux aawaxút'	He drags it back.	145
Dleit Ƙáa x'éináx ƙ'idéin aya.áxch ax éesh.	He understands English very well, my father.	
Dleit Ƙáa tsú ooyáawun.	It was like white people, too.	
Áwé, yá ƙux has naa na.át hú.	Yes, there he walked us back to her.	
Du jín akaawaléek,	He throws his fist up,	

«ee yakkwagwáalt.»	“I will beat your face.”	150
Kúnax̄ xat aawagóok ash jinák̄ ayawdiháan ch'a aan áyá.	She really shoved me, but still I just stood back from her grip.	
Ash six'áan ash éex' ax̄ éesh.	He looked mad, and was yelling, my father.	
Kúnax̄ áa yéi yatee wé x'aháat xánt̄ xwashéex áwé tsu kúx̄ aawaxút'.	It was really just there, I ran by the door—he dragged her back.	
X'aháat xánt̄ ashawlixút'	Drug her by the head towards the door.	
Wáa sáyá keeyanóok?	What are you doing?	155
Yá wé dleit káach ax̄ séek' du jín	This white person, my daughter's hand.	
Ch'u dáxnax̄	Both of them	
ka ax̄ een akaneek tle wé	and told me then	
«Wé káayagijéit kei isahánch.	“That chair is holding you up.	
Kaawayix' áwé shakeeyóokch.»	She was going to shake you into oblivion.”	160
Ax̄ een akaawaneek	He told me.	
«Tsu yéi kéés' kunóogu,	“The tide does it,	
iyakkwagwáal, kushtuyax̄ ch'a yéide xat wudusxóot'l.	I am going to hit you, it didn't matter where it dragged me.	
Kúnax̄ x'áant xaanúk i yís.	I am so mad at you.	
Yeedát hél neildé iyagwált de.»	Now you are not going to roll on home.”	165
Kúnax̄ kadaxgáax̄ . «Wáa sá keedagáax̄?	She was really crying out. “Why are you crying out?	
I yax̄ xá xat kooligé, xat ku.aa, xat najáakw!	I am the same size as you, me though, go ahead and beat me up!	
Xat najáakw!	Beat me up!	
Iyakkwagwáal xáach tsú.»	I'm going to hit you, me too.”	
<i>My dad was just waiting for her to hit him once.</i>		170
«Ahhh!» kux̄ dak'ool'in yaa kandagáx̄.	“Ahhh!” she was yelling while backing up.	
«Tlax̄ tlél has du éex̄ eesheek̄ Lingít adátx'i!	“Don't you ever touch Tlingit children!	
Kei i xá kkwanéek.	I am going to tell on you.	
Tlél haat yakgeedlaak̄.	You will not succeed here.	
Ax̄ toowú yanéekw wé aadé yaa kinaa shyén yá ax̄ séek'.»	I am sad at the way you shook my daughter.”	175
«Frank! Frank!»		
Tlax̄ a yáanax̄ yatee daná.	You are drinking too much.	
Ikaawashóo ak.wé? Tlax̄ yéi a káx̄ i jeet woogoot.	Are you drunk? You got too much.	

Át aawagóok wé shaawát tlein.	He pushed through her, that big woman.	
Latseenín xá ch'as yisikóo wé asgeiwú.	You know those seiners were strong, you see.	180
Has du daa.it yéi koodéin nuch.	It really flowed in their body.	
Tléix' kaa jín áwé i een át aawagúk,	With just one hand, they can shove you around,	
yéi kligé shaawát.	that big woman.	
Wé adátx'i ku.aa has du toox yaa kunatéen xát tsú.	The children were frightened, and me too.	
Hél neil yaa xat wusigoodí ax éesh.	My father did not take me home.	185
Ch'a wáat xá áyá wéide s gé xá a kát uxwanúk.	How long did we go until I sat down on it.	
A kát aagáa ax een áwé kaa ée at latóow wé yakyee ax éesh aax woogoot.	On it, and then that teacher walked away from my dad.	
Hóoch een x'éí s kux wudihán,	She stood back from him as he said,	
«Iyagwgawált.	“I am going to hit you.	
Kúshstayáx iyawdakaají.	It doesn't matter what you say.	190
Eeshandéin yoo kaylishóo ax séek'.	You tormented my daughter.	
Ax téix' aax xásixán wé atk'átsk'u.	I love that child from my heart.	
Tlax áyá du een sh kaydzikít.	You really closed yourself up with her.	
Aan áwé x'éit has shuwaxích wé x'aháat.	With that they slammed the door.	
Ax tláa ax neil yee dagáaxi.	My mother was crying in my home.	195
«Jail-de gaxdusgích,» yéi daayaká.	“He'll be thrown in jail,” she said.	
Ax éesh:	My father said:	
«Kushtuyáx, kushtuyáx áx' ash has kakgwalnéek.»	“It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter what she tells them.”	
Yéi áwé	That is how	
ch'a yéi gugéink' áx x'éidáx kux wudihán wé shaawát tlein.	that big woman will stand back a little bit from my words.	200
Kúnáx x'aant oonúkch.	She was always angry.	
Aadóo sá Lingít x'éináx yoo at x'awditán tliyéi kawunadálch du x'aan jiyeet,	Whoever spoke in Tlingit would be frozen beneath the weight of her anger,	
aadé haa wshik'áani yé.	the way she hated us.	
Aax áwé	From that	
aax jidanáak.	she quit.	205
Prunes,	Prunes,	
dried apricots,	dried apricots,	

<i>apples,</i>	apples,	
<i>ḳa a een uwaxúgu fruit</i>	these dried fruits,	
<i>Ḳa beans</i>	and beans	210
Goverment ách áwé wjinaaḳch yoo duneek.	The government always left these behind, it is said.	
Aadé haa wshik'áani yé tlél haa x̣'ei x̣á wootee.	The way she hated us, she stopped feeding us those things.	
Gwál ch'a du yáx̣ dleit ḳáach eetí yéi adaanéiyin.	Maybe it's like she would only work on what was left over from the white people.	
A kaadé aawatáw s'aatix̣ haa wsitee ldakát uháan.	We all became thieves on that.	
Kinde haa yéi kantudax̣jéilch wé	We would always pack them up, those	215
<i>Prunes ḳa</i>	Prunes and	
<i>x̣'áax' yáx̣</i>	like apples	
<i>yáx̣ a kawsixúgu aa.</i>	those dried things.	
Taaw s'aatí haa wliyéx̣,	It made us into thieves,	
aadé yoo haa kaawashóo yé.	how much we suffered.	220
Ḳúnáx̣ tlél daa sá ḳustí	There really was nothing.	
hél government hél daa sá át; yeedát áwé ldakát ḳáach	The government gave nothing; now, to everybody	
tlákw has du jeet yéi ajigahaaych.	they are always giving things.	
Oodzikaayi ḳáa yéi ax̣ tuwáa yatee x̣át.	Lazy people, that is how I feel about it.	
Yáax' áwé, wé	Here, the	225
Catholic Church áyú wtuwa.át.	Catholic Church over there, we went there.	
Hás tsú át has haa kanagúkch,	Them, too, they pushed us around,	
yá Lingít x̣'éináx̣ x̣'awtudatáani.	those of us who spoke Tlingit.	
Wé	That	
has awushk'áan yís áyá haa yoo x̣'atángi.	hatred they had for our language.	230
Ax̣ tláa ḳa ax̣ éesh jeedáx̣ haa kawduwajeil.	We were taken away from my mother and my father.	
Shgagwéide haa ée awdudziwóo	We were sent to Skagway.	
Yées yan wududliyéx̣ wé	It was newly built, that	
<i>Catholic school</i>	Catholic school	
Aadé yaa haa jeewahaa.	We were ordered to go there.	235
Áx' áyá tsú	There, too,	
hél ḳaa tuwáa ushgú ax̣ shátx̣	people didn't want	

áx du xánx xwaagoodí.	me to go around there with my older sister.	
Kúnáx áyú eeshandéin yoo haa kaawashóo.	We suffered horribly.	
Wáanganeens áa akuxwdlixéitl' shux'wáanáx.	Sometimes at first I was afraid.	240
Hél haa ulgé.	We were not big.	
Áwé, ax shátxich	Yes, my older sister	
aadáx xat gasanúkch du een a ká xéix'w át.	she always carried me away from it and onto the bed where we slept.	
Ts'ootaat yaa kunahéin áwé tsá aax xat usnúkch wé yee.at	When morning came, only then would she pick me up from the bed.	
Yagéiyi át,	It's a big thing,	245
aan eeshandéin yoo haa kawlishoo, hás tsú.	they tormented us, them too.	
Tléil ch'a keetáanáx haa shaxaawú xút' has ujéilch.	It was cruel the way they dragged us all the time by our hair.	
Wáanganeens áwé haa yadut'ách'ti nuch.	Sometimes we always got slapped in the face.	
Yá wáanganeens áwé xwaa.áxch	Sometimes I would always hear	
k'isáani yátx'i	the little boys	250
has kasgáaxi.	their crying out.	
Ax een has akaawaneek:	They told me:	
«yéi kdagéiyi	“big	
straps een áwé tle ldakát has du daat dut'ách't een,» yu.á.	straps, they would beat their entire bodies with them,” they say.	
Ch'a has du x'éináx has akneek.	They would tell it through their mouths.	255
Has x'axwawóos', «a géit yéi adaanéi?»	I would ask them: “did they do something wrong?”	
«Tléik'»	“No.”	
Has du jín een ku.aa haa yadut'ách't.	They slapped us in the face with their hands, though.	
Haa shaxaawú,	Our hair,	
has du jiyís gé áa yei wdudzi.oo?	was it there just so they could use it [to drag us around]?	260
Hél keetáanáx haa shakaayúkx.	They cruelly shook us by the head.	
Ldakát eeshandéin yoo haa kawdudlishoo.	Every kind of suffering was there for us.	
Yáax' kwa kux kutudateen,	We came back here, though	
ax tláa ka ax éesh has xánx'.	to be with my mother and father.	
Yéi áyá has yawdudzikaa ax éesh ka ax tláa:	This is how it was said to my father and my mother:	265
«Wutusikóo a daat at yidanaayí»	“We know about your drinking.”	

Ax éesh yéi ayawsikaa:	My father said:	
«ayáx áwé haa ee x'eeyaká—at tudaná.	“That’s right, what you said—we drink.	
Ch’a aan ku.aa has du daat haa yawsiták haa yátx’i.	Nevertheless, we take care of them, our children.	
Ldakát yéide wutusikóo	We know all the different	270
aadé haa seeyahéiyi yé.»	ways you want to do things to us.”	
Altín wé	He watched him, that	
<i>Priest</i>	Priest	
ax éesh	to my father	
yá yee daayaká x’áan kik’náx:	he said with anger:	275
«Lingít yoo x’atángi has du ée ilatóowu.»	“you are teaching them Tlingit.”	
Yee jeedáx has kagaxtoojeíl, ldakát hás.	We are going to take them away from you, all of them.	
<i>Sister</i> has gaxtulayéix ka <i>Catholic Priest</i> .	We will make them into [Catholic] sisters and priests.	
Hél a tóodáx has yakgwa.aat wé church.	The church will never leave them.	
Oh! Kei kaxwdigaax,	Oh how I cried out,	280
aagáa gíwé tsú yáat’aa xwaahán, xat tsú, aadé l haa tushik’éiyi yé.	and maybe this one, too, standing here, the way we were terrible.	
Has du yát xahán hás tsú.	I stand up to them, too.	
«Tlax tlél <i>Catholic nun</i> xat gaxyilayeix.	“You will not make me into a Catholic nun.	
Tlax tlél ax tuwáa ushgú.	I really don’t want to.	
Xat gaxdusháa.	I am going to get married.	285
Adátx’i ax jee yéi kgwatée.	I am going to have children.	
Hél ax tuwáa yee ushgú.	I don’t want you all.	
Ayáx xat uwawádi a tóodáx yaa kkwagoot wé church.»	That’s right, when I grow up I am going to walk along right out of the church.”	
Ch’a yeisú jinkaak ká keijínx xat sitee a tóodáx yaxjixeex.	Just when I was fifteen I ran right out of there.	
Ch’a gégaá áwé wé	It was in vain, for the	290
<i>Bible</i> ,	<i>Bible</i> ,	
Dikee Aankáawu yoo x’atángi tlákw xatóow.	I read the word of God all the time.	
A káx xádatóow.	I read.	
Áwé Catholic priest át uwagút ax een akaneek:	This Catholic priest came and tells me:	
«ax een yá kaduneek	“it’s been said to me	295

<i>Bible</i> eetóow.	that you read the Bible.	
A <sub>x</sub> jeet tí wé <i>Bible</i> !»	Give me that Bible!”	
Yóot x̄waagú <sub>k</sub> tle	I pushed him away then and said,	
«Tlél yéi kgwanei.	“it’s not going to happen.	
A kat x̄a.áa a <sub>x</sub> <i>Bible</i> -ee.	I am standing on my Bible.	300
I tuwáa sigóo áwé a káa x̄at gasagoo,	If you want to push me off of it,	
i een kak <sub>k</sub> walagaaw.	I am going to fight you.	
Hél yakgeedlaak.	You are not going to win.	
Hél a <sub>x</sub> jeedáx gageetee Dikee Aan <sub>k</sub> áawú yoo x̄’atángi.	You are not going to take the word of God away from me.	
Wáanáx sáyá hél	Why is it	305
<i>Jesus</i> daat at haa ée latóow?	Jesus is not being taught to us?	
Ch’as yá <i>church</i> daat.	It’s just about the church.	
Wáa sáwé ikaawahaa?	What happened to you?	
A tóodáx yaa k <sub>k</sub> wagóot de.	I am going to walk along out of it.	
Tlax̄ tlél haax̄ eegoodí <sub>k</sub> !	Don’t you ever come here!	310
Protestant-x̄ x̄at gu <sub>x</sub> satée.	I am going to become a Protestant.	
Tlax̄ tlél haa ushk’é.	We were so bad.	
Has du yátx’i haa x̄án, haa tsú aan.	Their children would come to us, and us too with them.	
A káa daak tux̄wdishát.	I would change their minds.	
Wé <i>legislators</i> een yoo x̄’awtuli.átgi a káa daak tux̄wdishát.	We would talk to the legislators and change their minds.	315
X̄wasikóo átk’ aheeníx̄ x̄at sitee, Lance.	I know I am a believer, Lance.	
Dikee Aan <sub>k</sub> áawú x̄asix̄án.	I love the Lord.	
Dikee Aan <sub>k</sub> áawu	The Lord	
yú a káa woonáawu kanéist	the cross on which he died	
daat yáx̄ sá a <sub>x</sub> toowú yak’éi.	What is like this, I feel good about.	320
Hél a <sub>x</sub> ee wdultóowuch.	It wasn’t taught to me.	
Ch’a x̄áach tsú x̄wadlitóowu.	Just me, too, I taught it there.	
Ách áwé Dikee Aan <sub>k</sub> áawu kúnáx̄ x̄asix̄án.	Because of that I really love the Lord.	
Dikee Aan <sub>k</sub> áawu du yéet k̄a dulatóow k̄a Yakgwahéiyagu.	The Lord’s Son, and it is taught, and the Holy Spirit.	
Daat yáx̄ sá x̄six̄án yá yakyee.	What is like this, I love today.	325



Hél aadóo sá, xát tsú, hél has xat ujaak.

Nobody, not me either, they did not kill me.

Eeshandéin ax daa has tuwatee.

They have pity on me.

Daa sá káa x'axwdigax'

What I prayed for,

ax jeet aawatee.

He gave to me.

### **2.3 Loss Compounded By Loss Contained Within Systematic Racism**

What makes this even more impossible for some to feel is the complexities that are seemingly infinitely compounded by Indigenous cultural genocide, poverty, diminished sense of self-empowerment, and colonial trauma. The narratives of genocide and oppression continue to loop through individuals and collectives in Indigenous communities when it comes to language and cultural loss. Only in recent years have these interconnected pieces of oppression been looked at in terms of their long-lasting effects on Indigenous people and their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. In addition, the connections between those aspects of health and the overall health of Indigenous languages has recently entered into scholarship, but is slow to enter into the logic and operating philosophies of Indigenous and non-Indigenous health organizations. Consider the following:

The data reported ... at least in the case of BC, those bands in which a majority of members reported a conversational knowledge of an Aboriginal language also experienced low to absent youth suicide rates. By contrast, those bands in which less than half of the members reported conversational knowledge suicide rates were six times greater. Although the newly minted index of Aboriginal language use was found to form a common factor with other previously identified markers of cultural continuity, even this crude marker of language use was shown to have strong discriminatory power independent of these earlier factors, and to make a significant independent contribution to our understanding of the high youth suicide rates that plague many Aboriginal communities. Altogether these results demonstrate that Indigenous language use, as a marker of cultural persistence, is a strong predictor of health and wellbeing

in Canada's Aboriginal communities.<sup>9</sup>

To clarify the issue,

Indigenous peoples continue to be colonized by having their land and resources appropriated as they experience ongoing cultural interference. The continual conflict and interference of Indigenous land and cultures have imposed high degrees of long-term stress on Indigenous peoples around the world. However, despite the global practice of colonialism, land seizure and vicious assimilative assaults, non-Indigenous settler institutions generally fail to identify and assess the impact of systemic racism, displacement, assimilation, and cultural genocide as explanatory factors in relation to the extremely deleterious health status of the world's Indigenous peoples (Mitchell & Maracle, 2005) ... The limited available data regarding Indigenous mental health indicates Indigenous peoples are experiencing high rates of depression, alcoholism, suicide and violence, which have been linked to cultural discontinuity and oppression (Kirmayer, 2000). The enduring impact of persistent and pervasive acts of colonial violence have been described as colonial trauma characterized as complex, continuous, cumulative and collective with long-term intergenerational effects (Mitchell, 2011; Mitchell, 2015 in press) ... Trauma is therefore experienced not just by individuals but also by the collective. This collective trauma signifies an external agent and the political nature of the crimes against Indigenous people supporting the thesis that Indigenous mental health is a social justice issue with political pathways to healing.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.4 Closing the Door on Ourselves

The matter of language loss is compounded by the lingering effects of language abandonment. Indigenous communities would benefit from historical analyses of their own treatment of their ancestral languages, but doing so effectively requires a balanced mindset and compassion for ancestors who experienced tremendous suffering at the hands of racism, genocide, and hegemonic

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9 Hallett, Darcy, Michael J. Chandler, and Christopher E. Lalonde. "Aboriginal Language Knowledge and Youth Suicide." *Cognitive Development* 22 (2007) 398.

10 Mitchell, Terry. "Colonial Trauma and Political Pathways to Healing," in *Indigenous Cultures and Mental Health Counselling: Four Directions for Integration With Counselling Psychology*, ed Suzanne L. Stewart, Roy Moodley, and Ashley Hyatt (New York: Routledge Press, 2017), 146–148.

social pressures. The abandonment of Indigenous languages by Indigenous peoples creates disjuncture between people and their language and within families. People historically made justifiable decisions: in order to protect their children from torture and ridicule, they encouraged their children to assimilate in order to succeed financially or within civil rights battles. Sometimes this was done quietly, as generations shifted to monolingual speakers of a colonial language. Other times, it was done using methods that created shame, anger, and confusion in regards to how families should think about one another and about the languages that tie them to countless generations in places where they now suffer economically, physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

I once saw Yupik scholar Harold Napoleon give a presentation in Anchorage, perhaps in 2002, and he talked about Alaska Native people being wealthier now than we ever have been. To paraphrase, he said:

Widespread famines are a thing of the past. While it may seem like we are impoverished, we have more than we have ever had before in terms of homes, tools, transportation, and finances. But what we suffer from now is a spiritual poverty.

This is an important statement in terms of how wealth is measured and what it means to have and to have not in Indigenous communities today. I find myself blessed to work with fluent speakers on a wide variety of projects. From translating stories recorded from elders seventy years ago, to creating Tlingit language books for children, to creating new ways to teach the complexities of the Tlingit language, our speakers are tireless and their knowledge is seemingly endless. What I notice, though, is they are the meek among us and I wish that would change.

One time I mentioned to a Tribal leader that we should develop a neighborhood of language speakers. I said there were only around ten fluent elders who work with us regularly in Juneau, and we should buy them nice homes and just pay them \$50,000 per year instead of having them do timesheets or have us submit invoices for them. I recall our elders trying to figure out how to pay bills, and some people would say to me, “well if they loved the language they would do it for free.” My thinking was that these elders *had worked their entire life*, harder than most would ever understand, to keep the language rich and complex. There was never an economy for this. Woosh Jixoo Éesh George Ramos,

L'uknaxádi once remarked to me: they used to beat my hands with rulers for speaking the language, and now I am getting forty dollars per hour to speak it. I told this Tribal leader that our elders work hard and have fought their whole life to learn the language and keep it alive inside themselves. Instead of timesheets and work logs, we should just have them on a salary and tell them to let us know when they are tired. The response was this: well, social welfare programs never work.

This is the level of abandonment and internalized cultural hegemony that exists for Tlingit and many other Indigenous languages. Another personal family narrative that was shared to me was told by a man in his sixties who committed to learning Tlingit. In this family there are two brothers and two sisters, and the sisters are quite a bit older. The brothers, however, were born at a time when families had decided to stop speaking Tlingit to children. Given the narratives already discussed, this is completely understandable. Who would not protect their own children? In order to save them from beatings and humiliation, and to help them to fit in, parents did not speak to children and many of them forbade other family members from speaking to their children in Tlingit.

We have to examine these stories without passing judgment, but revisit them in order to unearth complicated pain and suffering so it can be understood and released. What is common in oppressed societies—in particular with people who have experienced a largely invisible genocide such as that experienced by Indigenous North American peoples—is an inability to purge cyclical traumas. This results in reliving horrors and even perpetrating those horrors upon future generations. From this suffering we can see gaps between generations in communities and families, and we can see abuse and abandonment that creates soul wounds in much the same way as those inflicted by teachers and religious leaders in the 20th century. This is termed lateral oppression or lateral violence,<sup>11</sup> and it can cripple language movements by taking the form of internal othering,<sup>12</sup> denying the passage of

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11 Lateral violence occurs within marginalized groups where members strike out at each other as a result of being oppressed. The oppressed become the oppressors of themselves and each other. Common behaviors that prevent positive change from occurring include gossiping, bullying, finger-pointing, backstabbing and shunning (Kweykway Consulting).

12 The act of othering is an act of oppression where one group establishes itself as normal and other groups are abnormal social disfigurements that are measured from the established position of privilege on the basis of race, gender, class, sexuality, or other social classifications. Internal othering occurs within a group that is already othered by a social power majority, and then applies similar tactics within its own oppressed population. An example would be an oppressed race whose higher income members discriminate against those of the same race who are impoverished.

knowledge, making fun of one another instead of building support networks, rumormongering, bad-mouthing, backstabbing, and other forms of intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual violence.

Returning to the narrative of this family, the parents decided not to teach Tlingit to the sons, even though the daughters know the language. Their decision extended to the entire family: no one was supposed to speak Tlingit to the boys. If we go back to this era, in the 1950s, the grandparents and especially great-grandparents of those boys would have limited English proficiency so this decision effectively severed the relationship between them and much of the generations above their parents. One day the parents called one of the young sons into the kitchen—he was about eight years old. The mother told him to get her some coffee, and to add some cream and sugar to it, and then to make her some toast and butter it. She then told him to sit down at the table.

“I thought I told your grandfather not to speak Tlingit to you,” she said. The boy said that he had not been, to which his mother responded that she had just given him a long string of commands in Tlingit and he had done everything she said. If she was not teaching him the language, she had pointed out, then where was he learning it if not from his grandfather. The boy responded that she was talking to him in English, to which his father said: “no son. It was Tlingit.” In his mind, he had not separated the languages and the need to hide it from his parents. His mother asked him to tell his grandfather to come to the house. He ran up and told his grandfather that his mother was angry that he was speaking to him in Tlingit. The grandfather said, “I told you not to tell her!” He said he that she found out by talking to him, and he didn’t realize. After a long talk, the grandfather never spoke to his grandson again in Tlingit, and the string was broken.

The result of stories such as this one is often anger towards previous generations and an internalized pain about the language that can slow or even halt language learning at later ages. This is one type of linguistic disjuncture that we see in Indigenous communities: an entire generation that feels lost from opportunities to learn a heritage language. This can be compounded when people with little to no language exposure learn at a faster rate and may have less trauma than those of an older generation or differing social circumstances who were forced to abandon their own language.

## 2.5 Cultural Genocide & Cultural Hegemony

When languages are replaced by colonial languages, they are often done so in a time when the colonial language is full of racist terminology and logic about the Indigenous population that is being colonized. The severity varies and has lasting effects in all parts of the colonized population. These effects transform into social norms and notions that are often commonly accepted to the point that questioning them seems abnormal or the aberrant act of a troublemaker who is more anarchist than trickster. It is hard to see it today, but at the time when language shift began, Indigenous languages were often replaced by a language that hated Indigenous peoples, with terms such as savage, primitive, pathetic, filthy, inferior, and siwash that were employed to create and maintain a disgusting and pathetic Other. Meek refers to this as follows: “Linguistically this ideological separation was reinforced within the education system through the promotion of one language, English, over any other linguistic code. This linguistic separation was accompanied by the underlying assumption that Indian students were ‘primitive,’ ‘one dimensional,’ ‘silent learners.’”<sup>13</sup>

The results of this are an interconnected web of oppression that erases a language that inherently values its Indigenous peoples with one that despises them. Examining this is less than a historical speculation; the sociopsychological effects of this removal of love and insertion of hate creates massive chasms within individual and social value systems, placing Indigenous peoples on paths to a nightmare world where they no longer value themselves individually and collectively, no longer cherish their languages, and allow the suffering of previous generations to fade into abstraction. During a presentation at the Te Kotahi Research Institute, Māori scholar and Indigenous legal defender Moana Jackson addressed this in the following way:

I commend you all on the work that you do. But there is a danger sometimes that we can turn something as potentially personally destructive as colonization into an abstraction, into a historical artifact which diminishes or invisibilizes the violence, the destructive harm, that it does. Because colonization is not some abstract theory. It is a belief assumed by most of the states in Europe that they had the right to dispossess Indigenous peoples who had done them

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<sup>13</sup> Meek, Barbra A. *We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabaskan Community*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012), 5–6.

no harm and posed no threat, and that presumption in itself is an act of violence. The racism which underpinned and continues to underpin colonization is an act of violence, and I think as we gather the knowledge so that we can perceive the Mana that we have it is important not to diminish the reality of that violence, because if we do then we diminish the suffering of our people who endured through its terrible hurt and agony ever since 1840. And we owe those people—we owe our mokopuna—together our strength and together our knowledge so we do not diminish the pain which they have endured.<sup>14</sup>

Statements about cultural values and what is cherished are dangerous as well, because they open the door for widespread assumptions. However, the shift we have seen is that Indigenous culture and identity has value, but the path to total assimilation and language loss largely continues and one of the many intertwined reasons for this is that Indigenous value structures and ways of thinking do not transfer when its population allows its language to slip away from them.

Tlingit scholar Ḵaagwáask' Ishmael Hope refers to this in some of his writings and teachings, noting that Indigenous peoples might refer to “elders” and “knowledge” without thinking of specific elders and the genius they wielded in both Tlingit and English, and that without knowledge of the language the ideas that were transmitted are largely displaced and misunderstood. In order to avoid being a shell of what Indigenous people once were, in order to truly cherish languages, generations, knowledge, individuals and collectives, then the people and the language must be brought to a place of reckoning and healing. The language of the colonizer will always result in assimilation unless the Indigenous language is given power, time, and space to reclaim its descendants.

## **2.6 The Fight for Civil Rights**

Yet another brick in the wall that separates a people from their identity and language is the citizenship processes of the early twentieth century. As gold was found in Alaska and prospectors flooded the area in hopes of quick wealth, massive displacement of Indigenous peoples began in Southeast Alaska. Until 1924, with the passage of the Citizenship Act that determined that Native

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<sup>14</sup> Jackson, Moana. “He Manawa Whenua 2017 Day 3.” Te Kotahi Research Institute. *YouTube*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zV2PoRbBQsM&feature=youtu.be&t=32m24s>



American people were indeed citizens of the United States, there were severe limits on property ownership, voting rights, choice of schools, and the wealth of protections and benefits of citizenship. If an Indigenous person found gold, they would have to find a white friend to make the claim for them. There were segregated separate schools for Indigenous peoples and they were forced to live in Indian Towns, which were often relocated depending on where the white populations wished to stay. In the harsh formation of Douglas, Alaska and Atlin, British Columbia, Tlingit peoples left their winter villages for summer camps, only to return in the fall to find their homes had been burned down and a town built on top of its remains.

With citizenship came the promise of eventual equality. One of the primary difficulties in this regard, however, related to the ways in which an Indigenous person became a citizen in these times. As seen in the Citizenship Certificate in Figure 6, an Indigenous person was required to declare the “total abandonment of tribal customs and relationships.”<sup>15</sup> This of course included use of Indigenous languages, which could result in denial or revocation of citizenship. Without citizenship, a person’s children could not attend a desegregated school—which often meant boarding schools in Sitka, Wrangell, or out of state at Chemawa Indian Home School in Oregon. In order to achieve citizenship, an Alaska Native person would have to locate a white school teacher who would vouch for their citizenship, that the Indigenous person in question had indeed “abandoned all tribal customs and relationship,” and then that person would have to find five additional white people who would also sign this document. This assimilation methodology prescribed behaviors to Indigenous peoples that resulted in language and culture loss, and transformed white people in the community as defenders of citizenship, which was a status that involved cultural and linguistic suicide in order to achieve the benefits afforded to citizens of the United States. This unique legal status creates disjunctures in systems of individual and group identity formation, the ways that individuals and social groups value Indigenous cultures and languages, and also the ways that benefits are attached to assimilation and denial of those benefits are attached to adherence to Indigenous language and cultural survival.

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<sup>15</sup> SHI Archivist. “A look back to the early 1900s.” *SHI Library, Archives, & Collections Program*. Sealaska Heritage Institute. Mar 2, 2010/. Retrieved from <http://shispecialcollections.blogspot.com/2010/03/look-back-to-early-1900s.html>.



No 3,

## CERTIFICATE

OF EXAMINATION OF AN ALASKA INDIAN AS TO QUALIFICATIONS AS TO CLAIMS OF  
**Citizenship**

THIS IS TO CERTIFY:

That on the 2 day of January, 1917,  
John M. Thumant an Indian born in  
Haines, Alaska, on October 15<sup>th</sup> 1892  
made application to me, the undersigned, constituting a majority of  
the teachers in the United States Government School at Haines,  
Alaska, to be examined by me as to his qualifications and claims for citizenship;

That on the 2 day of January, 1917,  
duly examined the said applicant, which said examination broadly covered his  
general qualifications as to an intelligent exercise of the obligations of suffrage, his  
total abandonment of tribal customs and relationship, and the facts regarding his  
adoption of the habits of civilized life;

That on such examination I we found that, in my opinion, the said  
applicant, John M. Thumant, has abandoned all tribal customs  
and relationship, has adopted the habits of civilized life and is properly qualified to exercise intelli-  
gently the obligations of an elector in the Territory of Alaska.

Isabel A. Gilman

Teachers in the U. S. Government School  
at Haines, Alaska.

I, John M. Thumant, a native born Alaska  
Indian, solemnly swear that I do now and for all time renounce all tribal customs and relationships,  
so help me God.

John M. Thumant  
[Applicant's signature]

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 2 day of Jan, 1917,  
at Haines, Alaska.

E. S. Ramsey Notary Public  
A. S. Commissioner  
My Commission Expires 19

We, the undersigned, white citizens of the United States have been permanent residents of  
Alaska for more than one year and do hereby certify that we have been personally acquainted with  
the life and habits of John M. Thumant for more than one year, and that, in  
our opinion, he has abandoned all tribal customs and relationship and is duly qualified to exercise  
the rights, privileges and obligations of citizenship.

J. W. Hildschman  
R. E. L. Winterberger  
Mrs. E. L. Winterberger  
Florence L. Casside

Figure 6: Alaska Native Certificate of Citizenship

## 2.7 Endangered Languages and Population Motivations

There is a path out of this, but it involves shifting cultures and social institutions in order to foster a generation that has a fuller understanding of the ways that these historical traumas and genocides affect the present and future. There is no innocent resistance to language equity, and no innocent bystander in the death of Indigenous languages. The individual who speaks out against language equity should be approached with a manner similar to that conveyed by Vaneigem when he states: “Anyone who talks about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life—without grasping what is subversive about love and positive in the refusal of constraints—has a corpse in his mouth.”<sup>16</sup>

The disjunctures and disruptions are massive, as Meek points out in the following: “While language endangerment is first and foremost about the often violent replacement of one linguistic code by another, it is also about the rupturing and replacement of sociocultural practices and everyday interactions, resulting in the disintegration of the speech community or social networks that sustained the previous code.”<sup>17</sup> Language advocates need to know that a reconstruction is possible, where a world is deliberately altered to create spaces where languages have a chance of continuity into an eternal future. To achieve this, however, requires a blending of authentic cultural values and strengths, language revitalization theories, post-colonial studies, and reformations of individuals, cultures, social institutions, and governance. The path is challenging and requires a commitment to fight forever and stay unified, but the result is a place where the language flows through children as it has through their mouths of their sacred ancestors.

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<sup>16</sup> Vaneigem, Raoul. *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. 1st PM Press Edition. Oakland: PM Press, 2012, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Meek, Barbra A. *We Are Our Language*, 4.

# 3

## Increasing Adult Fluency in the Tlingit Language

Yan Has Awsinéi Ax Yaa Gaxtoo.át Yé

*They Have Prepared the Path for Us*

Aaa,  
wé sgóonx' káa ée dultóow,  
Aadax̄ ku.aa tél káx̄ yee uwa.áxch áwé,  
haa x̄áni yéi has datee wé adátx'i.  
Máa yateeyi yéix' áwé  
ch'u tle yéi has haa x̄'anawóos' neech:  
«máanax̄ sáwé?»  
Tlax̄ átx̄ sitee wé,  
yóo x̄'atánk wutushagóogu.  
Goox' sá yéi gaxtoo.óo?  
Wé neil áwé tél yéi du.oo.  
Áwé, has du éesh ka has du tláa,  
máa sá tél has awuskú ch'a has tsú.  
Aadax̄ ku.aa  
wé daxashigóogu áa Lingít,  
tél tlax̄ k'idéin yéi wdu.aax̄  
tél kaa x̄'adu.aax̄ch.  
Ách áwé,  
wé aan káx' tsú ch'u yéi  
yéi kuyatee  
tél yéi wdu.aax̄.  
Ách áwé tlax̄,  
tlax̄ a eeténax̄ haa yatee.  
Yeedát áwé,

Yes,  
people are taught in school.  
From this, though, they don't understand you all,  
the children who are with us,  
Sometimes  
they always ask us:  
“why is that?”  
It is really something,  
the mastery of language.  
Where are we going to use it?  
It is not used in the home.  
Their fathers and their mothers,  
how they don't know, and the children too.  
From that, though,  
the ones who have mastered Tlingit  
are really not heard  
because people do not understand.  
Because of that,  
in town as well,  
just where people are  
it is not heard.  
Because of that,  
we really need it.  
Now,

ashagóogu áa Lingít,  
 ƙa ch'a  
 máa sá yoo x'adudli.átk?  
 Ch'a naanáx, á áwé tlax át  
 átx sitee ƙa eetéenáx haa yatee.  
 Tléix'gáanáx dushgóogu áwé yoo x'atánk.  
 Máa yateeyi yéix' lidzée.  
 Tél wudushgóok  
 máa sá woosh dagaxdul.áat.  
 Ch'a yoo x'atánk yís.  
 Wé Lingít,  
 gwál wéit'aat yáx  
 yéi du.óowu,  
 ƙa tsu wé tsá ƙaa dakanduneegí.  
 Máa sá, wé "CDs" yoo duwasáagu át tsú  
 ƙaa dakamdut'áal'i.  
 Aagáa áwé ch'a tlákw gaxdu.áxch.  
 ch'a góo sá ƙaa tuwáa sigóo.  
 – Keiyishí

those who mastered Tlingit,  
 and just  
 how will it be spoken?  
 It is through this, that we really  
 are in need of something special.  
 One person at a time, language is mastered.  
 Sometimes it is difficult.  
 It is unknown  
 how people are going to talk with one another.  
 For language.  
 The Tlingit,  
 maybe like that one  
 it is used,  
 and only then people will tell each other.  
 How then, the things called CDs  
 will be pressed for people, too.  
 And then let it always be heard.  
 wherever people want it.  
 – Bessie Cooley, Kookhittaan <sup>1</sup>

### 3.1 Current Efforts

Despite decades of university classes, immersion camps, intensive learning gatherings, curriculum development, and language documentation, the Tlingit language has a dismal rate of adult fluency. Of the hundreds of people who have been through various language programs, only a handful can communicate fluently as second language speakers. In order for language revitalization efforts to take root, a generation of second language speakers must become fluent quickly in order to learn all they can from living birth speakers and become competent teachers of future generations. Implementing deliberate structural changes in the Tlingit language community will raise confidence, fluency, use, ability, and social power for learners of Tlingit. These increases will fuel a language revitalization movement that creates the speakers necessary to instigate and lead efforts to create language immersion environments for people of all ages and locations.

Adult fluency rates can be examined in three realms: 1) percentage of adults who become fluent once committing to learning the language, 2) amount of time it takes to become proficient

<sup>1</sup> Cooley, Bessie. "Keiyishí -- Dáx.aa -- Lingít sh too dultéew (Tlingit Language)." Translated by X'unei Lance Twitchell. *YouTube*. Aug 13, 2013. Lingít Language Champions & Simon Fraser University. Translated by X'unei Lance Twitchell. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMY6mADGoho>

communicators, and 3) levels of fluency. In order to increase effectiveness and efficiency in these areas, programs that currently teach adults must change their methodology to teach through the language instead of about the language, additional programs must be developed that focus on increasing adult fluency, and second language learners must have authority in program and activity development. Looking at Hawaiian, Mohawk, and Okanagan language revitalization efforts will assist with this process, but any concepts incorporated from other programs must fit the culture and language of the Tlingit people.

### **3.2 Understanding Barriers to Fluency**

Speakers of endangered languages have few areas to freely interact in the language, and their languages are rarely the language of use and power. The speaking environment is so unusual that it is foreign in its ancestral homeland, causing learners to over-think their contributions to the speaking community. Infrequent use increases the potential impact of errors to the point that they become terrifying, and learners often wait for someone else to talk or for the immersion event to end so they can communicate in English. I have seen groups of students who can talk and laugh and joke for hours on end, and they have advanced abilities in the Tlingit, but once someone calls for an immersion environment it feels like conversation has to be painstakingly manufactured to the point that everyone feels like a stranger to one another.

These social phenomena are cyclical in nature and directly contribute to language loss. Bernard Perley adopted Schmidt's 1992 model, represented in Figure 7 as a spiral of declining language use for second language learners.<sup>2</sup> Limited use and exposure results in reduced fluency, which in turn results in less confidence and increases reliance on English. The end result is more silence and less dynamic language environments. The combination of lack of confidence and lack of exposure is a death sentence for many Indigenous languages, and adding to that is the rigid social expectations when a language is reduced to domains of elevated social use. For example, if a language is only used in ceremony and in highly elevated social situations like funerals, then learners are unlikely to speak

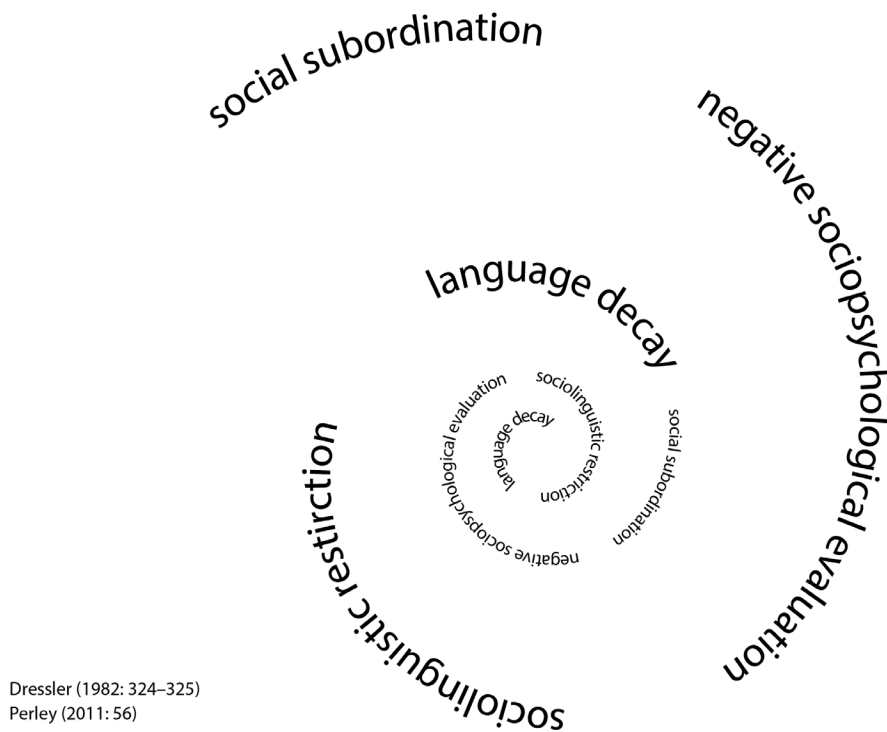
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<sup>2</sup> Perley, Bernard C. *Defying Maliseet Language Death: Emergent Vitalities of Language, Culture, and Identity in Eastern Canada*. University of Nebraska Press, 2012, 56.



the language out of fear of making a huge mistake and because only the highly fluent and capable speakers will be selected to speak. When Indigenous languages lose their domains, it opens the door to a harsh reality where new learners know how to interpret large speech acts like traditional stories or ceremonial speeches, but struggle to talk about everyday social interactions, feelings, opinions. In addition, various social functions such as engaging in debates and arguments, flirting and developing relationships, raising children, and more are inaccessible to the speaker because all language acts are social performances that have critical social functions. The compounding result is often a growing population who can understand much more of the language than they can speak, and language gatherings where fluent speakers are heard and newer learners rarely have a chance to try the language out in a safe space that allows for errors without long lectures in English.

## Model of Language Endangerment I



Dressler (1982: 324–325)  
Perley (2011: 56)

Figure 7: Model of Language Endangerment I

### 3.3 Defining Fluency

Several fluency scales can be examined and adapted for Tlingit learners. These scales are not meant for birth speakers, who have a different and more natural path to fluency. Future studies might examine what the levels of birth speakers might be, but these scales are presented with the intention of determining the quickest and most efficient path to full fluency for adult second language learners. There are several methods for measuring the fluency of speakers. The most general might be from Grenoble and Whaley, who propose starting with the following rating:<sup>3</sup>

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
FLUENT SPEAKERS	Fully fluent speakers with native knowledge of the language. Comfortably use the language in all domains and can do so on a daily basis.
HIGHLY PROFICIENT SPEAKERS	Not fluent, but have a high level of communicative ability. May make some systematic grammatical errors and may have some lexical gaps in their knowledge of the language.
SEMI-SPEAKERS	Some limited communicative ability and passive knowledge of the language.
NON-SPEAKERS	Do not know the language. May know a few commonly used phrases, but cannot create or interpret any new utterances

Table 1: Grenoble & Whaley Fluency Scale

Measuring fluency is an invasive and dangerous process for learners of endangered languages, who may perceive their lack of fluency as limiting to their future as a learner, and even lead them to mistakenly believe their efforts contribute to language death instead of revitalization. The assessor must be aware that—as Nora and Richard Dauenhauer note—“it is a tremendous blow to one’s self-esteem to fail the ancestral language.” Care should be taken to protect privacy, confidence, and the student’s reputation as a productive learner. Productive and accurate assessments will contribute to increasing fluency, however, and should be seen as a tool that shows the progression to fluency.

The SIL International “Second Language Proficiency Estimate of Vernacular Speakers”<sup>4</sup> has two additional categories, ranked by numbers, and provides detail on what speakers can do at those levels:

<sup>3</sup> Grenoble, Lenore A.; Whaley, Lindsay J. *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization*. Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition, 163.

<sup>4</sup> Grenoble, Lenore A.; Whaley, Lindsay J. *Saving Languages*, 163.

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
5	Speaking proficiency is functionally equivalent to that of a highly articulate well-educated native speaker and reflects the cultural standards of the country where the language is natively spoken.
4	Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to needs. The individual's language usage and ability to function are fully successful.
3	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and occupational topics.
2	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited requirements in other domains.
1	Able to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations on familiar topics.
0	Unable to function in the spoken language. Oral production is limited to occasional isolated words. Has no communicative ability.

Table 2: SIL Second Language Proficiency Estimate of Vernacular Speakers

A similar system by Daniel Rubin is explained by Tsunoda as “five degrees of fluency that may be aimed at or achieved in language instruction.”<sup>5</sup> This scale includes titles for each level that focus on what users are able to do in the language. The highest form here is “creative,” which is an important distinction because it discusses an ability to create new uses and realms for the language.

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
A CREATIVE	Able to understand and speak the language fluently in ways that create new word usage and structures, showing a deeper understanding of language and its potential new uses.
B FLUENT	Able to understand and speak the language with confidence and skill, with understanding of normal syntax, grammar and rules of form, and an extensive and growing vocabulary.
C FUNCTIONAL	Able to speak the language, with basic understanding of its syntax, grammar, and rules of usage and a minimal vocabulary
D SYMBOLIC	Able to use common phrases and sentences in formal settings, as symbols of language participation and cultural ownership.
E PASSIVE	Able to understand common words or phrases, with or without deeper comprehension of their meaning.

Table 3: Rubin's Five Degrees of Fluency

<sup>5</sup> Tsunoda, Tasaku. *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization: An Introduction*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006, 179.



The last example to explore is the American Council On The Teaching Of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale,<sup>6</sup> which is summarized in the table below. This table summarizes the major levels, but ACTFL has detailed descriptions of these categories, including a breakdown Low, Middle, and High levels within Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced in comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing.

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
DISTINGUISHED	Can reflect on a wide range of global issues and highly abstract concepts, use persuasive hypothetical discourse, and tailor language to a variety of audiences.
SUPERIOR	Can support opinion, hypothesize, discuss topics concretely and abstractly, and handle a linguistically unfamiliar situation.
ADVANCED	Can narrate and describe in all major time frames and handle a situation with complication.
INTERMEDIATE	Can create with language, ask and answer simple questions on familiar topics, and handle a simple situation or transaction.
NOVICE	Can communicate with formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases.

Table 4: ACTFL Fluency Scale Summary

Each of these scales could be implemented in Tlingit second language programs. An adapted ACTFL scale works best for this, implementing material from the other scales presented here. Reading and writing scales exist, but those have less to do with second language learner fluency in terms of daily Indigenous language use. Students of Tlingit almost always learn to read and write faster than they are able to comprehend, and especially to speak. Efforts to increase adult fluency will focus primarily on speaking because that is the slowest moving aspect for second language learners. Comprehension will be a major focus, as will appropriate cultural uses of the language, but these will be secondary to speaking since the goal of any language program should be creating speakers.

In order to effectively utilize the scale for measuring Tlingit fluency, measures of assessment must be implemented that are consistent across programs and regions, respecting dialect differences yet having enough consistency to produce results that are accurate in terms of determining where a learner is at and what steps should be taken next. The assessment process should boost the confidence of learners by showing them their specific progress, and encourage them to discover new ways to

6 American Council On The Teaching Of Foreign Languages. *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012*. 3rd ed.

use the language as engaged speakers. In addition, if a learner has leveled out at a specific place, the language community should be able to identify what barriers might be at play, and then collaborate on methods of moving them along in their comprehension and speaking fluency. Teachers and program coordinators must map the road to fluency and collaborate on assessment methods. The following table is a guideline for measuring Tlingit fluency:

LEVEL		DESCRIPTION
ADVANCED	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ can describe events in any time frame and with multiple variables that tie concepts together using relative clauses and intricate metaphors</li> <li>◦ can understand why certain uses of language are spiritually powerful and can comprehend the clan relationships involved in speech situations</li> <li>◦ can interpret and recall long narrative strings, including traditional stories and clan migrations</li> <li>◦ can interpret and utilize all verb modes, although use of the more complicated and rare modes (potentials, hortative, conditional, etc) may contain occasional errors</li> </ul>
	INT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ can talk about day-to-day occurrences and topics that are local, regional, or global with a wide variety of emotions and personal opinion</li> <li>◦ can express doubt and certainty, theorizing and using logic and Tlingit knowledge to interpret and comment on the world</li> <li>◦ can use habitual, repetitive, imperative, and prohibitive verb modes</li> <li>◦ can understand most everything that is spoken in Tlingit in conversations and oratory performances</li> </ul>
	LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ can use a wide variety of verbs and conjugate them accurately for all object &amp; subject combinations in imperfective, perfective, and future modes</li> <li>◦ can speak for long periods of time about a wide variety of subject matter, even if there are inconsistencies in grammar and word use</li> <li>◦ can listen to long stretches of Tlingit oratory without needing translations, and can summarize in Tlingit what was being discussed</li> <li>◦ can introduce other people and tell short narratives about themselves and others</li> </ul>

LEVEL		DESCRIPTION
INTERMEDIATE	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ can use a wide variety of verbs, conjugating them with high accuracy for person and time in perfective, imperfective, and future modes</li> <li>◦ can articulate family and kinship structures in the language, including which houses and clan individual family members are from</li> <li>◦ can follow long stretches of Tlingit about complex topics with a fair level of accuracy, and can respond to speeches given at cultural occasions</li> <li>◦ can give short speeches about various occasions, incorporating relevant simple metaphors and responses to things that have already been said</li> </ul>
	MID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ can use a wide variety of verbs, although may not conjugate them accurately for person or time</li> <li>◦ can recognize and use a wide variety of nouns and pronouns, including objects and subjects in verbs</li> <li>◦ can accurately repeat phrases and words with a high degree of accuracy</li> <li>◦ can follow most casual conversations, although contributions may be mostly in English or limited to short phrases</li> </ul>
	LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ speech is often limited to memorized phrases that have few variables, but can introduce a number of conversational topics</li> <li>◦ can often understand what topics are being discussed, though may not understand how those topics are being addressed</li> <li>◦ continues to build vocabulary in nouns and verbs, but also in relational nouns, adjectives, adverbs, interjections, and particles</li> </ul>
LEVEL		DESCRIPTION
BEGINNER	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ knows over 450 conversational phrases &amp; 300 nouns</li> <li>◦ can introduce self and understands basic clan relationships</li> <li>◦ can substitute nouns and basic pronouns to customize phrases</li> </ul>
	MID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ knows 90 conversational phrases &amp; 160 nouns</li> <li>◦ communicates with memorized phrases</li> <li>◦ can pronounce and recognize nearly all Tlingit sounds</li> </ul>
	LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ no real functional ability</li> <li>◦ pronunciation may be unintelligible</li> </ul>

Table 5: Proposed Guide for Measuring Tlingit Fluency

### 3.4 Creating Fluent Speakers: a Time Commitment

With benchmarks for fluency established, as in table 5, teachers and learners should begin developing realistic expectations on the time it takes to become fluent. Having a clear path, scaffolded curriculum, and a program that understands the progression to fluency helps create a clearer path,

and then students should rearrange their lives to allow adequate time for language acquisition. Language Testing International (LTI) has a number of tables that cover four groups of languages, which are increasingly complex for English-speaking learners. The higher the group, the more time should be expected to learn the language at the listed levels. These estimates also group learners into the following categories: superior aptitude (naturally exceptional language learners), average aptitude (typical language learners), and minimal aptitude (those who have difficulty learning languages). For monolingual speakers of English learning a highly endangered and complex Indigenous language, the estimated number of hours to achieve fluency are much higher because of limited exposure & opportunities to speak, and the needed ideological transformations that must occur in order to become an active and continually developing language speaker.<sup>7</sup>

The following LTI Tables show “levels of expected performance for language learners who complete full-time intensive and/or immersion, proficiency-based language training under the supervision of an instructor and with 1-4 students per class.”<sup>8</sup>

GROUP I LANGUAGES			
LENGTH OF TRAINING	MINIMAL APTITUDE	AVERAGE APTITUDE	SUPERIOR APTITUDE
8 weeks (240 hours)	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate Mid
16 weeks (480 hours)	Intermediate High	Advanced Low	Advanced Mid
24 weeks (720 hours)	Advanced Mid	Advanced High	Superior
GROUP II LANGUAGES			
LENGTH OF TRAINING	MINIMAL APTITUDE	AVERAGE APTITUDE	SUPERIOR APTITUDE
16 weeks (480 hours)	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Mid/High	Intermediate High
24 weeks (720 hours)	Intermediate High	Advanced Low/Mid	Advanced Mid/High
44 weeks (1320 hours)	Advanced Mid/High	Advanced High/Superior	Superior
GROUP III LANGUAGES			
LENGTH OF TRAINING	MINIMAL APTITUDE	AVERAGE APTITUDE	SUPERIOR APTITUDE
16 weeks (480 hours)	Novice High	Intermediate Low/Mid	Intermediate Mid/High
24 weeks (720 hours)	Intermediate High	Advanced Low	Advanced Mid/High

7 Wilson, William. “Higher Education In Indigenous Language Revitalization.” The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization. Ed. Leanne Hinton, Leena Huss, and Gerald Roche. New York: Routledge, 2018, 86.

8 Language Testing International. “How Long Does it Take to Become Proficient?” Accessed from <http://www.language-testing.com/how-long-does-it-take>

GROUP III LANGUAGES			
LENGTH OF TRAINING	MINIMAL APTITUDE	AVERAGE APTITUDE	SUPERIOR APTITUDE
44 weeks (1320 hours)	Advanced Mid	Advanced High	Superior

GROUP IV LANGUAGES			
LENGTH OF TRAINING	MINIMAL APTITUDE	AVERAGE APTITUDE	SUPERIOR APTITUDE
16 weeks (480 hours)	Novice High	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Low/Mid
24 weeks (720 hours)	Intermediate Low/Mid	Intermediate Mid/High	Intermediate High
44 weeks(1320 hours)	Intermediate High	Advanced Low	Advanced Mid/High
80-92 weeks (2400-2760 hours)	Advanced High	Superior	Superior

Table 6: Levels of Expected Performance for Language Learners

As we adopt these to Tlingit, we should first look at the estimated number of hours required to reach fluency. These should be high quality hours, which means intensive individual study with learning materials and recordings of fluent speakers, full immersion environments, effective master-apprentice programs, group study sessions, and other activities where Tlingit is the language of use and power. The number of weeks assumes 30 hours per week of intensive study.

TLINGIT LANGUAGE			
LENGTH OF TRAINING	MINIMAL APTITUDE	AVERAGE APTITUDE	SUPERIOR APTITUDE
17 weeks (500 hours)	Novice High	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Low/Mid
67 weeks (2000 hours)	Intermediate Low/Mid	Intermediate Mid/High	Intermediate High
100 weeks(3000 hours)	Intermediate High	Advanced Low	Advanced Mid/High
200 weeks (6000 hours)	Advanced High	Superior	Superior

Table 7: Levels of Expected Performance for Tlingit Language Learners

Focusing on the number of hours, a learner should then determine the number of hours that can be spent on the language per day, five days per week. Without factoring in any lengthy absences—which results in decreases in fluency and confidence if intensive language study does not continue in some form or another—learners can estimate what their fluency levels should be using the table below.

LEVEL			HR/DAY	DAYS	YEARS	HR/DAY	DAYS	YEARS	HR/DAY	DAYS	YEARS
SUP		6,000	2	3,000	11.54	4	1,500	5.77	8	750	2.88
ADV	H	5,000	2	2,500	9.62	4	1,250	4.81	8	625	2.40
	M	4,000	2	2,000	7.69	4	1,000	3.85	8	500	1.92
	L	3,000	2	1,500	5.77	4	750	2.88	8	375	1.44
INT	H	2,000	2	1,000	3.85	4	500	1.92	8	250	0.96
	M	1,000	2	500	1.92	4	250	0.96	8	125	0.48
	L	750	2	375	1.44	4	187.5	0.72	8	93.75	0.36
LOW	H	500	2	250	0.96	4	125	0.48	8	62.5	0.24
	M	250	2	125	0.48	4	62.5	0.24	8	31.25	0.12
	L	250	2	62.5	0.24	4	31.25	0.12	8	15.625	0.06

Table 8: Estimated Time Commitment and Fluency for Tlingit Learners

### 3.5 Defining Immersion

With fluency levels established, and estimated times to reach certain levels, language teams can begin to clearly define what *immersion* means for Tlingit. If immersion means that no other language is used in the environment for the entirety of the activity, then the word *immersion* is often misused when describing gatherings, master-apprentice sessions, living and spending time with fluent speakers, and implementing learning programs. The late Ken Hale, a linguist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, developed a concept of “degrees of immersion” which suggests that immersion is not an on/off switch, but instead and like most things, exists in varied degrees on a spectrum. Language use and chances of attaining fluency can be visualized, as shown in Figure 8, where increased use of the target language dramatically increases the chances of attaining fluency. Language education starts with using English most of the time to prepare students for language learning, establish a safe learning environment, and introduce essential first concepts. This must give way to immersion learning, however, which means that Indigenous languages must be able to talk about their grammar internally: Tlingit grammar should be discussed using the Tlingit language. This secures the language as a normal, functional, essential part of the environment instead of being an unusual phenomenon that is explored like an archeology site.

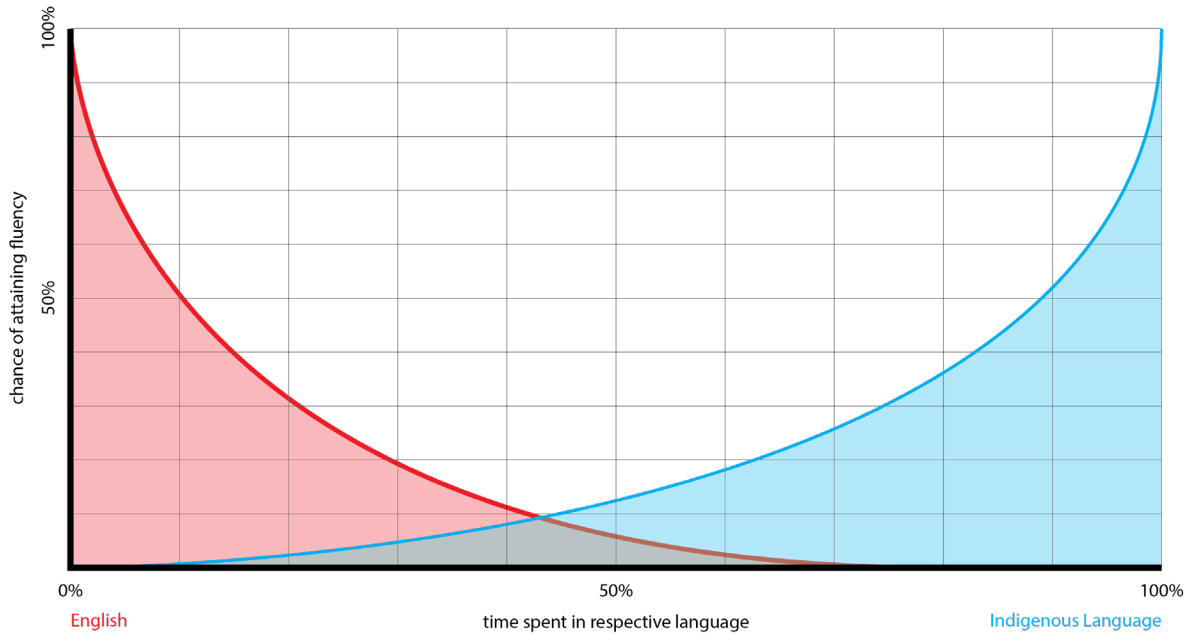


Figure 8: Immersion &amp; Fluency Expectation Graph

Language learners, teachers, and elders must create the immersion environment collectively, developing spaces where Indigenous language use is unforced, natural, and expected. In Hawaiian language medium schools, Indigenous language use is normalized to the point that English is unusual and even foreign. To help develop such places, language use should be carefully considered and monitored. Program coordinators should set reachable goals so groups can document and increase the amount of time spent in the language during immersion and language medium activities. This can be a rough estimate by program coordinators, who can implement tools like stopwatches to keep track of time spent in and out of the language. Monitoring techniques should not be presented as punishment or policing, but should be discreet and shared with the group later, celebrating accomplishments and setting higher goals for future events. Individual and group confidence should be maximized, and achieving higher levels of immersion should be recognized and celebrated. The following scale, adopted from Hale,<sup>9</sup> can be used to determine the targeted level of immersion for events.

9 Hale, Ken. "Linguistic Aspects of Language Teaching and Learning in Immersion Contexts." *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. Ed Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2003, 227–228.

DEGREES OF TLINGIT LANGUAGE IMMERSION	
LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
5	A child learning the language from birth in an environment where Tlingit is the primary language of use in the entire family and household. Full native fluency is guaranteed.
4	A school environment where all content is taught through Tlingit and it is the only language in use in the facility at all times. Tlingit may not be the first language learned, and it may not be the primary language of use in the home. Native fluency is likely in a P–6 program and guaranteed in a P–12 program.
3	A situation where the learner spends significant time (20+) hours per week with a master speaker and they use Tlingit exclusively as a means to communicate about life and the world. Tlingit is not the first language learned, and is not likely the language of use in the home. Native fluency is possible in a long term program with few interruptions, but unlikely in a short term program or if the amount of hours per week is less than ten.
2	An environment where Tlingit is used as a medium of education about a wide variety of topics, but is not used to teach about the language itself. This could be a full-immersion situation for extended periods of time or several times per year on a short-term basis, or language courses that talk about cultural and global content through the language. Native fluency is unlikely without additional immersion experiences, although it is possible over the course of decades.
1	A language class that has become immersed in Tlingit and no longer uses English. This course may teach specifically about the structure of Tlingit, but does so without the use of English. There are a wide variety of topics that are presented and the class is expected to contribute to the class through various listening and speaking exercises. Native fluency is not possible without additional immersion experiences.
0	A Tlingit language class or gathering that uses English over 50% of the time, or a student who studies intensively on their own but without exposure to immersion environments. This can prepare students for immersion experiences and build upon vocabulary, concepts, and abilities, but fluency is highly unlikely without additional immersion experiences.

Table 9: Degrees of Tlingit Immersion

### 3.6 The Tlingit Adult Immersion Program

In order to immediately increase adult fluency rates, a new program should be developed that incorporates existing and historical efforts to create second language speakers of Tlingit. Existing language classes must move towards immersion environments in order to teach through the language, immersion gatherings must happen more often and more naturally, and new program activities should be developed that increase the frequency and focus on immersion gatherings. The development of such programs should begin with the following goal and operating philosophy:



### Goal

- To create fluent speakers as quickly and efficiently as possible by fostering healthy and safe monolingual Tlingit environments.

### Operating Philosophy

- To create and protect Tlingit immersion environments where people want to be, are welcomed and loved, and where they always feel positive and enriched by their language learning efforts.

With a firm understanding of purpose and methodology, the Tlingit Adult Immersion Program can then work on incorporating fluent elders into the classrooms & learning environments. Once a structure is in place, then elders can come in to provide the backbone of language fluency in comprehension and speaking.

A long term plan would utilize a “language house” or “language center” where people can visit for short term activities like adult and family learning programs that function as 0–2 immersion levels, and where resident learners of various levels can live together for periods of time immersed in Tlingit at levels 3–5. A model program could be the Chopaka Immersion House, where participants reside in an immersion house for 5 months, studying Nsyilxcn (Okanagan) 6 hours per day. One of the program participants, Michele Sʔímlaʔxw Johnson, said of her immersion house experience, “We emerged after five months, transformed—we are now nʔəqwcín, clear speakers. We are midway through our language transformation from kʔpʔxwínaʔ, ears opened (comprehension phase), to nʔtʔcín, straightened or true speech.”<sup>10</sup>

The Mohawk Adult Immersion Program operates in a similar manner, only on a longer timeline and with a longer history. The founder of the program, Brian Maracle says, “the current program is full-time, which means studying and speaking six hours a day, five days a week for two school years. When people finish the program, they are proficient and can go all day without using English.”<sup>11</sup> The Tlingit Adult Immersion Program should prepare adults for short and long term residences at the language house, providing a salary for language tenants. This creates an economy for language learning, and

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<sup>10</sup> Johnson, Sʔímlaʔxw Michele K. “Yaʔtmín Cqwəłqwilt Nixw, Uʔ Nixw, Uʔ Nixw, I Need To Speak More, And More, And More: Okanagan-Colville (Interior Salish) Indigenous Second-Language Learners Share Our Filmed Narratives.” *Language Documentation & Conservation* 8 (2014), 137.

<sup>11</sup> Bellemare, Andrea. “Mohawk Immersion School Founder Honoured By Wilfrid Laurier University.” *CBC News*. Last Updated: Jun 23, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/aboriginal/story/1.3124147>.

allows coordinators to release participants who refuse to speak, hoping they would return at a future point more prepared and committed.

The language house would operate with a primary teacher and coordinator, who helps incorporate existing curriculum, develop needed curriculum, recruit and prepare learners, and coordinate visiting elders & other instructors or speakers. The primary teacher would also provide necessary lessons to prepare learners for living in the language for short or long term residences, and also promote the program, find new participants, and maintain a healthy and productive living environment.

The Tlingit Adult Immersion Program will create new environments and encourage the creation and strengthening of relationships with existing speakers. All of these activities will be done with the second language speaker in mind, focusing on safe spaces and maximizing the confidence of all involved. In addition, consideration will be given to how adults contribute to the Tlingit language revitalization movement by focusing on the following spheres:

**Increase Fluency of Teachers**

- In order to develop effective language education programs with higher rates of fluency, new teachers must be created who are highly fluent and understand Tlingit immersion teaching methodologies, assessments, and the path to fluency.
- This sphere focuses on increasing adult fluency and the ability to pass the language along in natural (home & community) and artificial (classroom & camps) settings.

**Increase Use of Language in the Home with Children**

- In order to ensure reversal of language shift, adults will be given tools and methods to bring the language home and elevate it to a place of power and use among families.
- This sphere focuses on increasing adult fluency in day-to-day language use among families and strategies to create a bilingual home, which has been referred to as “the most important locus of language revitalization.”<sup>12</sup>

**Increase Use of Language Among Adults**

- The language domain of adult second language speakers is any place where there is more than one speaker, and this is attained by convincing second language learners to stop using English with one another.
- This sphere focuses on changing social relationships from bilingual to monolingual Tlingit for learners of the language, which ensures fluency by making it the expected and exclusive means of communication between learners.

**Increasing Appropriate Language Use at Cultural and Public Functions**

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<sup>12</sup> Hinton, Leanne. *Brining Our Languages Home: Language Revitalization for Families*. Berkeley: Heyday, 2013, xiv.

- Tlingit cultural gatherings should privilege the Tlingit language, and in order to ensure proper use of language and the depth of language expected at such events, efforts will be undertaken to move ceremonial spaces back to Tlingit domains.
- This sphere focuses on developing the specialized vocabulary, concepts, relationships, and expectations for language performances in ceremony and social gatherings, preparing second language speakers by providing opportunities to practice and receive feedback from knowledgeable speakers and elders.

### 3.7 Willingness to Communicate

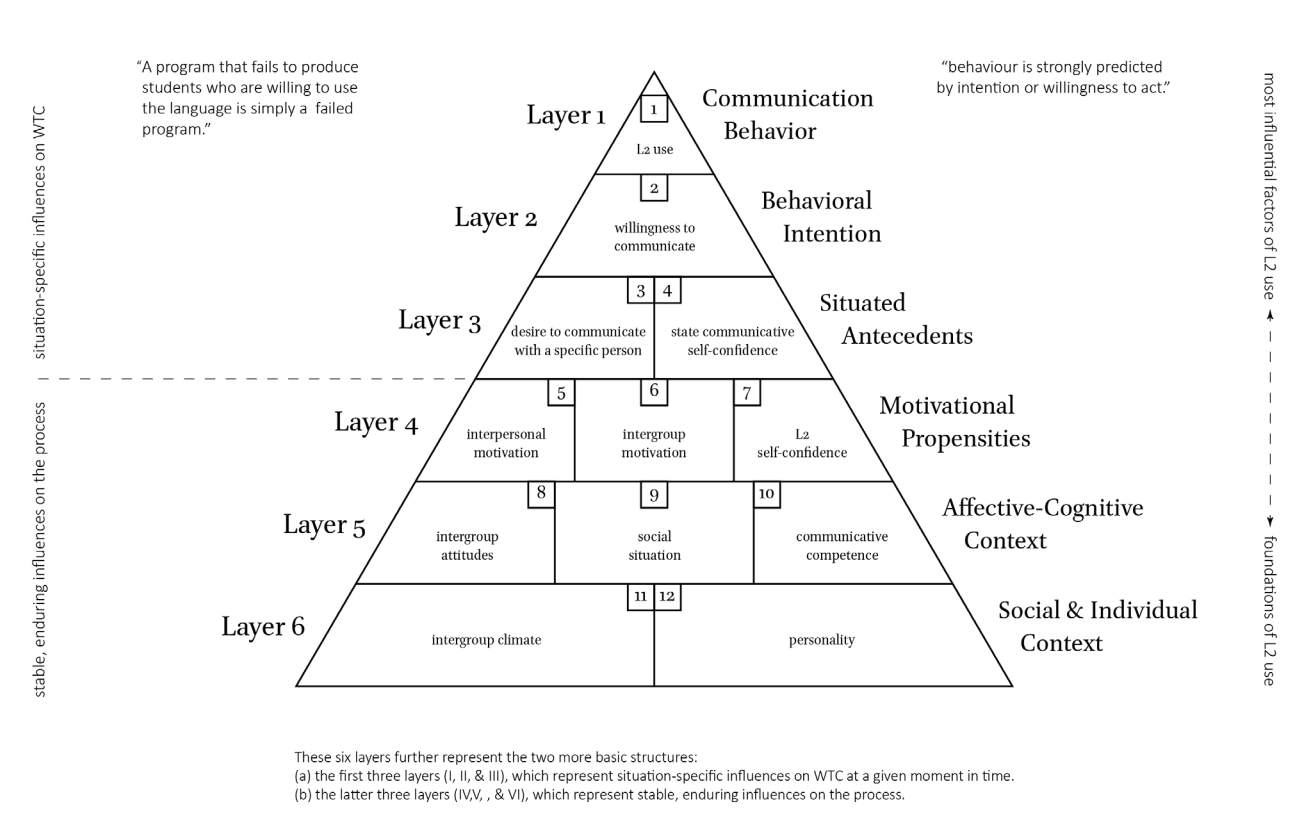
The final area of consideration in program development regards the types of environments that will be created. The primary language block for second language learners is a sociopsychological one. Dr. William Wilson refers to this as “overcoming the psychology of use.”<sup>13</sup> Studies in this area of language production use the term willingness to communicate (WTC), which can be defined as “a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a [second language]”<sup>14</sup> and functions as shown in the graphic below, adapted from MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels. This pyramid of sociolinguistic concepts details factors that determine whether or not a language learner is going to use the target language. The bottom layers are most foundational, and the top layers have a more direct influence on the learner. All of these areas combine to determine the likelihood that a second language learner is going to choose to use the target language, and these areas should be understood by program teachers and coordinators, who can focus on building a strong foundation and continually focusing on making individual and social adjustments that result in increased language use and therefore fluency.

As the Tlingit Adult Immersion Program is developed, strategies must be implemented to create environments where learners are encouraged to speak. These environments must be protected and so they become safety zones where students can focus on increasing fluency. In many current speaking environments, grammatical perfection is expected and has a negative effect on the willingness to communicate. Instead of laughing at students or putting them down for their mistakes, the safety

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<sup>13</sup> Wilson, William, class lecture, June 22, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> MacIntyre, Peter D., Zoltán Dörnyei, Richard Clément and Kimberly A. Noels. “Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation.” *The Modern Language Journal* 82.4 (Winter, 1998), 548.



- For second language speakers to live in a monolingual Tlingit home using day to day language with other learners, teachers, and fluent speakers. The focus here is on continuous flows of the language without structured lessons or activities.

### 3.8 Mohawk Adult Immersion Program Recommendations

A 2002 study of the Mohawk Adult Immersion Programs<sup>15</sup> gives some insight into the history of their efforts. The author, who is Mohawk but not a language speaker, interviewed program coordinators, instructors, and teachers so they could provide feedback on the program. At the time of the study, Mohawk adult immersion programs had been designed and developed for 15 years (since 1987), and the language had been taught in elementary schools for 30 years (since 1972). That means they have now been working with adult immersion programs for 29 years and youth education programs for 44 years. The study reports a continual decline in speakers, but the effectiveness of their adult immersion program is evidenced by a growing number of second language speakers, some of whom show tremendous communicative ability while in the program, as in the videos posted by Brian Maracle.<sup>16</sup>

The author's recommendations are listed here for assisting with the development of a Tlingit Adult Immersion Program. Mohawk is a polysynthetic language<sup>17</sup> with very low fluency levels among the population of its people, so many of the methodologies and experiences apply to a program developed for Tlingit. The relationship between Tlingit program coordinators and those in Hawaiian and Mohawk language programs will provide continuous feedback and advice, linking language revitalization efforts and creating a network of unity in purpose and drive.

#### Coordinators

- Adults not only need to learn the language, they also need to be provided with some mechanics of how to pass the language on, for they will quite possibly have an opportunity to teach the language.
- When staffing the program, it is advisable to team-teach the sessions and to utilize the skills of

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<sup>15</sup> Maracle, Iehnotonkwas Bonnie Jane. "Adult Mohawk Language Immersion Programming." *McGill Journal of Education* 37. (Fall 2002), 396–399.

<sup>16</sup> Maracle, Brian. "Learning Mohawk - Before and After." *YouTube*. Uploaded Sep 19, 2011. Retrieved from [https://youtu.be/MrqN\\_EQd5QY](https://youtu.be/MrqN_EQd5QY)

<sup>17</sup> Polysynthetic languages are common North America, and are made up of many small parts that have either meaning or grammatical function, and combine to create long strings of communication.

those speakers in the communities who have teaching experience.

- In the classroom, greater concentration is needed on the oral practice as opposed to the written portion of the program; reading can be easily developed later.
- Although planning and organizing are key factors, it is important to get things going right away. With the language in the state that it is, there is no time to waste on waiting until the right building is available, or the right number of people are enrolled, and so on.
- A comfortable learning environment and healthy food are conducive to adult language learning. In some programs, menu planning and food preparation in the language became part of the curriculum.
- Take it out of the academics, socialize it, make it fun, make it practical.
- In the programs, their notebooks know everything; what they have to do is get it into their head and onto their tongues.

### **Instructors**

- Different language levels in the classroom and other difficulties arose in the delivery of the planned program objectives.
- The speed of adult immersion learning proved to be problematic because adult students need more time than children to practice—therefore, the method of teaching adults has to be looked at closely when developing a language program.
- The instructors found they were sometimes over-prepared, but even that provided for flexibility in the classroom when it was needed.
- The instructors suggest that there be a goal established for the language project, and that the program should be well-prepared beforehand, but flexible, and possess a strong methodology.
- For those developing language programs, the instructors' general advice is to aim for fluency and to use a communicative oral approach.
- If we lose our language, we lose who we are.
- The language is as much as who we are, as a leaf is part of a tree.
- There is no reason whatsoever why our people in our communities can't be bilingual.

### **Students**

- If a student's residence is in another community, student housing becomes an issue in which administration may or may not become involved.
- All the students interviewed stated they registered in their immersion programs as a result of a strong personal desire to learn the language and to be able to carry on a conversation.
- A majority of the students described the language as a necessary element in being a Mohawk person and the language as strengthening their sense of identity
- Many students expressed a real opportunity in being able to pass the language on to their children and grandchildren by speaking what they know in their homes.
- Along with learning to speak the language, skills in how to teach the language were also acquired in some of the immersion programs.

- Some students were able to take the language and continue their academic education while others secured new employment.
- One dominant suggestion is to increase the length of time of the program to build on skills and learning experiences, and to phase the program into learning levels.
- Students felt that it was a good idea to establish a method to pre-test the students to decide the separate levels of language fluency.
- Students requested a learning evaluation be provided so they could determine where they were in their language learning.
- Some suggested the use of videotape so their presentations could be reviewed.
- They mentioned the need for a comfortable environment with adequate facilities where learning could be kept fun and appealing to all the senses.
- To support their learning, students emphasized the importance of having more resources available—visual and audio aids, and readers
- Conveyed the need to have two teachers in the classroom to encourage more use of the language and facilitate language drills
- Students also described the benefits of spending more time together outside of class where they could socialize using the language.
- They thought it important that new students entering the programs have some prior experience with the language, possibly through night classes.
- Key elements of the immersion programs are commitment to the program, to the language continuing beyond the classroom, time and patience.
- Newcomers are reminded to have patience with themselves because language learning can at times be confusing and frustrating.
- The language immersion programs are intense and focus needs to remain on learning the language, so it becomes important that personal issues, like child care and financial support, be taken care of prior to starting the program.
- The main advice coming from the students, however, is that the language needs to be practiced everyday—whenever and wherever.
- Language is the foundation of the healing of our people.
- You can see the world in a different way with the language. When you try to describe something in Mohawk, you think of it in a whole different way in the language. That's where the culture resides, in the language.
- The language makes the picture complete.

### **3.9 Setting Goals and Celebrating Achievements**

A final driving philosophy of the Tlingit Adult Immersion Program will be setting language goals and celebrating achievements. Learner ascension through fluency categories will be a celebrated



achievement, especially when a learner moves up major categories (novice → intermediate → advanced). The idea is to treat assessment as progress on a journey that has a clear intent (create speakers) and methods to reach fluency. Historically, students of Tlingit move through their programs without much fanfare, which fails to recognize the social significance of what second language speakers are doing: bringing a language back from the path of extinction. Many of those deeply involved in Tlingit language revitalization efforts realize the impacts of their devotion and successes, but widening the social sphere through graduation celebrations that are open to the public will allow for more acknowledgment of these efforts. More importantly, it will help pull families into the process, increasing the likelihood of bringing the language back into the home. Perhaps those who are connected socially to an adult who is succeeding will see these accomplishments and celebrations as proof that the language can be learned and it has a growing social value among Tlingit people.

Tlingit elder Keihéenák'w John Martin once told learners, «Yan has awsinéi áx̣ yaa gax̣too.át yé»<sup>18</sup> which translates to “they have already prepared the path for us” and is used as the name of this new program because we already know how to reach fluency. The path has been made by those who came before us, all of the speakers and wisdom-bearers, the teachers and the learners, and advocates like linguistis Richard Dauenhauer and Michael Krauss. Many of them have said that changes needed to happen in order to bring our language back to a safe place where they can thrive.

The Tlingit Adult Immersion Program is merely a series of lights along this path, helping learners see the route. Through this, we will create the next generation of learners, who will know without a doubt that the language loves them, needs them, and nurtures them. Another one of our elders, Kaséix̣ Selina Everson, said during public testimonies on efforts to make Alaska Native languages the co-official languages of Alaska, «haa wsineix̣ haa yoo x̣'atángi,» (our language saved us). Now is the time to ensure that the Tlingit language takes the next step, creating safe spaces where learners are loved and supported, and their journey along the path to fluency is celebrated. After watching graduations of the 'Aha Pūnana Leo, where families of the once-endangered Hawaiian language take turns giving speeches, one can see that adults and children can walk this path together.

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<sup>18</sup> Martin, John Keihéenák'w. “Keihéenák'w — Haa Léelk'u Has Du Yoo X̣'atángi (Tlingit Language)”. *YouTube*. Translation & transcription by John Martin and X̣'unei Lance Twitchell. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/lxu81CuWsIg>



# 4

## Creating Safe Acquisition Environments

Ch'a Haa Káx Yan Has Agadeil

*Just Let Them Watch Over Us*

Káax'w áwé át x̣waagoot yát  
has du x̣oo át x̣waagoot.  
Haa Léelk'u Hás yéi s haa daakáayin:  
Yee yoo x̣'atángi, haa yoo x̣'atángi  
k'idéin yaa yagsaxeex.  
Áwé gunalchéesh yéi gatu.aadí áwé.  
Ch'águdáx̣ áwé  
yéi s yaawaakaa:  
«haa yoo x̣'atángi áwé kut kei naxíx.»  
Ách áwé yeedát:  
k'idéin yéi naxadaa yéi jituné,  
áwé ldakát uháan Lingít.  
Haa Léelk'u Hás yóot'aadáx̣  
yéi has haa daakáayin:  
haa dachx̣ánx'i has du ya.áak.  
X̣át tsú has du yoo x̣'atángi tóonáx̣.  
Shákdé naaliyéi áwé has ayatéenin  
has du shukáade.  
Ch'a tlákw áhé tsú shux'wáa  
du daa át yoo s yawustaagin.  
Ch'a tlákw a daa yoo s x̣'al.átgin:  
has du dachx̣ánx'i  
has du ya.áak.  
Yá yeedát ku.aa x̣át ku.aa áwé

I used to walk around as a child,  
walk around among the people.  
Our Ancestors used to tell us:  
your language, our language,  
let it really be made into a public event.  
Let us walk with thankfulness.  
Long ago  
they said:  
“our language is getting lost.”  
Because of that, today  
I really let it flow as we work,  
all of us Tlingit people.  
Our Ancestors, from that one  
they used to tell us:  
a place has been made for our grandchildren.  
And me, too, through their language.  
Maybe they used to be able to see way out  
in front of them, into the future.  
First, too, they always  
took care of them.  
They were always talking about it:  
their grandchildren,  
a place was made for them.  
Now, though, me,

áwé a daa yoo x'akkwatáan ch'a tlákw.  
 Áwé akuxwdlixéitl' yáat'aa  
 áyú káx has atéeni has du ya.áakx'.  
 Gwál yú  
 jinkaak  
 áa tle xá  
 táakw yáadax  
 yá yoo s gugateení has du ya.áak  
 áwé áa akuxwdlixéitl'  
 A tín áwé  
 ax éet yidashí yéi s daayaxáká.  
 Haa yoo x'atángi tín  
 k'idéin yéinax yaa yagaxtusaxéex.  
 Kushtuyax goodé sá át wutu.aadí,  
 woosh xánt wutu.áadi,  
 ch'a kúnax Lingít x'éinax  
 yoo x'agaxtula.áat.  
 Ch'a daa sá Lingít x'éinax,  
 a saayí, has du saayí,  
 Lingít x'éinax  
 yoo x'anaxdul.aat ch'a tlákw,  
 yéi awé ax too nateech.  
 Ch'a tláw áwé a daa yoo tuxatánk  
 aadé yan has ayawsikáayi yé.  
 Ch'u cháagudax áwé xaatéen.  
 Tlél áwé k'idéin yéinax a daa yéi jitooné.  
 Ách áwé haa yoo x'atángi  
 ch'u kuxdé yéi woonee.  
 Has du yoo x'atángi ch'áakw  
 woosh tle gadushóo táakw shákdé.  
 Haa yoo x'atángi latseenín aagáa ...  
 Haa Shagóon daat ét áwé  
 yee een kakkwanéek.  
 Haa Léelk'u Hás  
 haa jiyís áwé yan has aawatánin,  
 has du yaa kooosgé daakeit.  
 A tooodax áwé  
 ch'a yéngaa xwasikóo  
 aadax xat yan yéi wdudzikáayi yé.  
 Tlél a kát xat seiwux'aakw.  
 Ch'a tlákw áwé a daa yoo tuxatánk.  
 Át shákdé  
 tlél kut kei naxíx ax toowú ná.  
 Haa shukáade Haa Shagóon daat ét áwé.  
 Ch'a tlákw a daa yoo tuxatánk.

I will always be talking about it.  
 And I am scared about this one, as they see  
 the places that have been made for them.  
 Maybe  
 ten  
 of them then  
 years from now  
 they will see the places we have made for them  
 and I am scared of that.  
 With that,  
 I am telling them: help me!  
 With our language,  
 we are going really cause events to happen.  
 No matter where we go,  
 getting together,  
 just really in Tlingit  
 we are going to speak.  
 What ever is said in Tlingit,  
 its name, their name,  
 in Tlingit  
 let people always speak it,  
 that is how I always feel.  
 I am always thinking about  
 they way they said it.  
 From long ago, I see it.  
 We are not working well on it here.  
 Because of that, our language  
 is just retreating.  
 Their language, long ago  
 people extended it then in the winter, perhaps.  
 Our language was strong, and then ...  
 The thing of Our Ancestors  
 I am going to talk to you all about it.  
 Our Ancestors  
 for us they set it down,  
 their box of wisdom.  
 Through it  
 I just then know  
 from that how it was told to me.  
 I did not forget.  
 I am always thinking about it.  
 This thing, maybe,  
 will not get lost and leave my thoughts.  
 This thing about our Ancestors is up ahead of us.  
 I am always thinking about it.

Ka yáa yeedát aadé haa yateeyí yé. Ldakát yéináx áwé a géide yaa at nanéen. Áwé ch'a tlákw has du een yoo x'axla.átch ch'a tlákw: «ax éet yidashí aan!» K'idéin yéináx yaa naxtusaxeex yá haa shukáade. Yá Deisléen áwé át wutuwa.át. Kux yéi haa yatee, yá haa yoo x'atángi daat haa yawsiták ...	And the way that we are now. Everywhere it is going wrong. Yes, I am always saying it to them, always: "help me with it!" Let us really make something public of it, this that is in front of us. We have arrived here at Teslin. We have returned, and we are taking care of our language ...
Gunalchéesh ax x'éit yeeysa.aaxi. K'idéin yéináx ax éet yidahshi! YayaKá, haa yoo x'atángi áyá gaxtusaxeex k'idéin yáanáx. Gunalchéesh yéi yaxwsikaa tsú, gunalchéesh. – Kaakligéi	Thank you for listening to me. Really help me here! It is said, our language, we are really going to make it public through it. Thank you, I said too, thank you. – Norman James, Dakl'aweidi <sup>1</sup>

#### 4.1 Safe Spaces

Central to Indigenous language movements is the question of whether or not people are going to speak the language. A language community can have policies and plans in place to theoretically stabilize, revitalize, or resurrect a language, but if the people do not speak it then it fails and languages continue to die. Professor William Wilson from the Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, says that a language movement begins by protecting existing speakers while creating new ones.<sup>2</sup> Doing this successfully requires a continuous examination of social phenomena through Indigenous Hyperconsciousness, identifying external oppressions that may inhibit language revitalization efforts, and ejecting self-oppressive behaviors by individuals and groups. A key part of any revitalization effort should be the creation and maintenance of safe environments, which can utilize Indigenous metacognition and Indigenous counter-hegemonic transformation to create safety zones, where dynamic unstratified hybrid coexistence occurs by

<sup>1</sup> James, Norman. "Kaakligéi -- Yaa Koosgé Daakeit (Tlingit Language)." translated by X'unei Lance Twitchell. *YouTube*. Aug 14, 2013. Lingit Language Champions and Simon Fraser University. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjlYnSIqMHo>.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, William. Class Lecture. Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, June 22, 2016.

identifying and rejecting oppression in ways that seek to unify and heal instead of ostracize or limit through negativity and gossip. This requires an analysis of oppressive forces, an acknowledgment of individual and social wounds, and engagement in difficult dialogues that seek to put the movement above all else while working on recognizing the value of individuals and groups without needing hierarchies of importance or worth.

## 4.2 Language Revitalization in Healthy Communities

When languages are highly endangered, language planners often have to create an artificial language that will become the new natural language, which is a process that mimics what second language speakers go through in places where the new language is thriving. As they begin internalizing grammar, they speak like a foreigner learning the language of a place they are new to, and over time and with practice their speech and thought patterns become increasingly naturalized. A similar process can be developed to create and maintain safe environments for our languages. It will take tremendous and even uncomfortable efforts at first, but once unfragmented spaces are established where unhealthy and oppressive behaviors are identified and rejected, then people can become accustomed to environments where languages are minimally influenced by oppression.

Many participants of language revitalization movements have experienced lives of hardship and powerlessness, so exerting power over others within the group in ways that subconsciously maintain oppressive structures is common. This *lateral oppression* is a common symptom of historical traumas in the aftermath of genocide. As explained by Kweykway Consulting, this phenomenon “occurs within marginalized groups where members strike out at each other as a result of being oppressed. The oppressed become the oppressors of themselves and each other. Common behaviours that prevent positive change from occurring include gossiping, bullying, finger-pointing, backstabbing and shunning.”<sup>3</sup> In order to build a language movement and to create speakers, language warriors must be prepared to counter these behaviors with counterhegemonic love. *Lateral oppression* is the act and lateral violence is the means. In language learning environments, *lateral violence* may take the form

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<sup>3</sup> “Lateral Violence in First Nations Communities.” *Kweykway Consulting*. last modified March 2, 2011, <http://www.kweykway.ca/lateral-violence-in-first-nations-communities>.

of laughing at and making fun of learners, discouraging speaking and only allowing listening, forming cliques that elevate themselves above non-members, and inappropriate social behavior like sexual suggestions, and teasing & underhanded insults or criticisms that are intended to lower someone's perceived value instead of raising their abilities and confidence as a speaker.

*Lateral violence* and *lateral oppression* are counterproductive and seem illogical from afar, but they should be identified, discussed, and dealt with because every new or potential speaker who becomes dejected and walks away from the language engages in a strange death march that is initiated and carried out by members of the group. This falls in line with the term *language suicide*, as explained by Bernard Perley:

Can a language commit suicide? No, it cannot. But I argue that it requires the assistance of the language speaking community to either breathe life into the language by continuing to use it as a daily communicative tool or to assist in the death of the language by refusing to breathe life into it. It is not the language that commits suicide; it is the community that commits linguistic suicide.<sup>4</sup>

But the suicide is less of an intention and more of a result of a combination of fear of freedom and inability to conceptualize a love for self after generations of oppression. These terms are what we would call *kalits'ígwaa* in Tlingit, meaning a sensitive subject that requires diplomacy. Many Indigenous communities already suffer high physical suicide rates, so if you start using terms like linguistic suicide the members of the community in question may feel even more disconnected with hope and change.

Before discussing potential solutions, the problems should be further examined. While each language has its own unique situation, creating safe acquisition environments for Indigenous languages can begin with a focus on two specific areas: rejecting value systems established or influenced by oppressors, and replacing lateral violence with love in ways that strengthen and unite instead of shame and eject. Wholesale transformations are difficult in the aftermath of American genocide, but it is possible and in fact necessary if languages are going to be restored to places of

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4 Perley, Bernard C. *Defying Maliseet Language Death*, 123.

strength and necessity. One of the key frameworks of Indigenous counterhegemonic transformation is the release of *cultural guilt*, *cultural shame*, *lateral oppression*, and *lateral violence*, which are all results of external oppressors. Although these social phenomena are foreign to Indigenous consciousness, they have unfortunately become a regular and accepted part of life in many Indigenous communities. Cultural bullying, shaming, backstabbing, and silencing occur in Indigenous communities when people are influenced by patriarchy and supremacy that are the undercurrents of modern American culture, and when feelings of jealousy and insecurity overpower those of love and kindness.

### 4.3 Replacing Oppression With Core Cultural Values

In order to liberate oppressed communities from self-destructive patterns, oppressive forces must be identified, openly addressed in healthy communications, and replaced with *respect*, *healthy communication*, *kindness*, and *unfragmented existence*. These social shifts are difficult because Indigenous peoples have been programmed to despise themselves and their core values, which Paulo Freire helps us to see in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account.<sup>5</sup>

Operating as self-oppressing peoples means highly conscious and compassionate change must occur or the death march will continue. Members of a language movement must operate in a permanent

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<sup>5</sup> Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014, Kindle location 587.

state of heightened awareness, Indigenous hyperconsciousness, in order to identify and reject cultural hegemony. In the colonized world where genocide was normalized and then made invisible, the most bizarre statements can seem completely normal to its citizens, which lead us to question the value of languages and cultures as they teeter on the verge of mass execution. More so, this coming massive death of cultures and languages is often invisible, or if discussed is seen as a sort of natural progression or unavoidable consequence of American greatness.

Creating a dynamic unstratified hybrid coexistence requires a constant analysis of power structures and behavior, and language warriors will have to develop a vigilant intolerance to bullying, cruelty, othering, and ridiculing that help maintain oppressive power structures by devaluing the self, others, or the Indigenous people. *Cultural guilt* is a symptom that results from the perceived or real death of language and cultures through a perspective of learned helplessness—the state of passivity developed in response to repeated experiences of failure that helps solidify apathy toward adverse living circumstances.<sup>6</sup> Tied into this are complexities of identity, apathy instead of resistance to oppression, and lowered self worth. Prilleltensky and Laurier detail the path to lowered self worth, which can be summarized for Indigenous in this passage: “Following exposure to innumerable devaluing encounters, people internalize the negative images projected onto them by dominating forces.”<sup>7</sup> For Indigenous languages and people, this specifically relates to the imposition of white superiority—and therefore Indigenous inferiority—in terms of intelligence, relevance to the modern world, and abilities to succeed according to the oppressor’s cultural standard.

Feeling excluded by members of the oppressed group or dealing with paralyzing fears of failure can compound these feelings, but they can be named, identified, rejected, and overcome through love. In order to find and live with that love as oppressed peoples, *cultural shame* should be clearly identified, avoided, and rendered powerless by always coming back to the ways in which Indigenous people value each other. At times, powerful participants in language revitalization movements use rhetoric that informs their own suffering people that they are not doing enough and are failing

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6 Prilleltensky, Isaac and Wilfrid Laurier. “Politics Change, Oppression Remains: on the Psychology and Politics of Oppression.” *Political Psychology*, 17:1 (1996), 134.

7 Prilleltensky and Laurier, “Politics Change, Oppression Remains,” 132.



ancestors, current citizens, and future generations simultaneously. A workable metaphor for this would be envisioning all the people suffering in freezing waters after the sinking of the Titanic. Then a boat comes along with people scowling and shouting “why didn’t you learn to swim?!” at those who are freezing and drowning. What we want is a boat with warm blankets, happy faces, warm drinks, and maybe even some nice music and big hugs. The key here is to encourage use and avoid seeking perfection, and to recognize that correcting with kindness and also allowing time and space for self-correction will result in higher confidence and language use, opening the door for reaching fluency at a higher rate.

#### **4.4 Battered People Syndrome**

These self-oppressive factors are symptomatic of what scholar Paul Berg refers to as *battered people syndrome*,<sup>8</sup> which is defined as:

The medical and psychological condition of a person who has suffered (usually persistent) emotional, physical, or sexual abuse from another person. Also called battered child syndrome or battered woman syndrome depending on the circumstances. In the case of a woman, her husband or partner inflicts the injuries.<sup>9</sup>

The condition in discussion here is one of utter powerlessness and sometimes subconscious belief that suffering is fate. The dehumanizing effects of American genocide and oppression only add to this, where the suffering is either invisible or an inevitable price for freedom. These social superstructures are replicated in Indigenous communities—micro-oppressions where suffering is created for those within the community who have less power by those within the community who have more power. When these things happen, there is rarely resistance to it in the same manner that the entire Indigenous community rarely resists the oppressive structures—macro-oppressions—that surround them. In order to escape this flushing toilet type of meta-suffering, the community must take control of its own future through orchestrated resistance that is fueled by principles of love, compassion, and patience.

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<sup>8</sup> Berg, Paul. class lecture, April 4, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> *Webster’s New World Law Dictionary*. ed. Jonathan Wallace and Susan Ellis Wild (Hoboken: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2010).



*Respect* is a principle that is often talked about in terms of core cultural values, but the word can easily become a blanket concept that covers up covert and passive-aggressive acts of *lateral violence*. What must be understood, explored, and communicated is the ways in which respect functions. Respect functions by treasuring the object at all times and recognizing the fluidity of time and agency of the subject. For example, if someone states publicly that they respect a member of the movement, but then subversively talks about that person's inefficiency in smaller groups then respect does not exist. Instead, there must be a governing love that commits members to cherish one another, and that criticisms and suggestions can be given and received without emotional traumas. For many Indigenous communities, there is a tremendous power in the words and intentions of people, so keeping respect as a fluid and fragile concept that requires maintenance helps members maintain an Indigenous hyperconsciousness about the impacts of their own behavior, and the rippling effects of the ways we communicate about one another.

Related to this is *healthy communication*, which means that the difficulties of navigating personalities, conflicting visions, misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and more must be done through methods that avoid suffering. In this case, hyperconsciousness is also necessary because the concept of being healthy can be misconstrued in order to limit discourse and accountability. Instead of owning an act of *lateral violence*, a member of the movement might say, "you are being disrespectful to me" when their intention is actually suppressing accountability in an effort to maintain *lateral oppression*. A term like *healthy* must not be ambiguous, but neither can it be universal; cultural hegemony has created scenarios where the oppressor determines what is normal and healthy behavior, therefore the Indigenous people must set the boundaries and norms for themselves based upon their own core values. In order to find the specific, language warriors must be conscious of generic indigeniety, which pieces together various generalizing concepts that cannot be traced back to an origin point in the language and thought world of ancient people. Determining what *healthy communication* is should be an item of regular discussion, and calling out *unhealthy communication* by guiding people back to respect should be practiced so that social groups and activities can maintain unity with minimal suffering and awkwardness.

Because the wounds are intergenerational and cripple all facets of cultural identity—spiritual, physical, mental, emotional—the movement must be based upon compassion. *Kindness* becomes a foundational principle in cases where ideas are developed and implemented. In many cases, it is the American way to “fight fire with fire” but the Indigenous community should be aware that doing so only creates more scorched earth and ruin. Water fights fire, and therefore the driving philosophies should be based upon kindness to one another. The colonizer has created images of a fierce and savage Other when it comes to Indigenous people, but this image is a reflection of the violence of colonization. For example, say you robbed someone and punched them in the gut repeatedly. If you took a picture of them and talked about how angry or pitiful they looked and made that the lasting image of them, then you would be mirroring the oppressor in terms of image creation.

If *kindness* is a guiding foundational principle, then it becomes difficult—if not impossible—to engage in self-oppressive behaviors. The goal is total language revitalization, a movement that is counterhegemonic and restorative, and kindness is the force that pushes things forward. There may be times when negotiations with outside forces are challenging and require resistance, so *kindness* and compassion must not be confused for passive acceptance. Instead, the guiding principles relate to how members of the group engage each other and treat the materials, activities, programs, and image of the language movement. A new and interested member of the language movement may be particularly sensitive to exclusion and mockery, therefore members of the language community must be ready to embrace them when they attempt to use the language. This is not to say that teasing and jokes and fun cannot occur, but that genuine kindness towards each other must be the clearly identifiable and driving force of actions, relations, and behavior.

The *unfragmented existence* is one where the concept of the interconnected whole takes precedence over the individual or any factions. In this case, hyperconsciousness applies to a variety of oppressive measures that create division, starting with identity politics that create complex processes of even being Indigenous. Similar to this are rules establishing who can speak and why. These are delicate areas for communities to monitor, because the foundations of the culture and language in question must be the definition, but also should be flexible in order to accommodate social change

when needed from the group and also to be able to recreate things that have been lost. When languages are highly endangered and cultural processes are not fully understood by many, a situation could be created where a few individuals become socially powerful in the Indigenous community by possessing knowledge of cultural processes and using that knowledge to impose social orders that limit expression and freedom. All cultures have gone through changes, often resulting in an ongoing liberation of suppressed parts of its population. As Virginia Woolf notes, “For it is a perennial puzzle why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet.”<sup>10</sup> She is talking about the limits of women authors in Elizabethan England.

Indigenous communities must be cautious when it comes to oppression of women, the poor, the uneducated, LGBTQ, mixed ethnicities, and those with disabilities. The meta-oppressions that create success in America are commonly replicated either in efforts to assimilate and succeed or to become a dominant cultural spokesperson who distorts culture in order to replicate oppressive individual success. In order to find the workable paths for Indigenous communities, difficult conversations will have to be initiated where the unfragmented whole can be envisioned, created, and protected. In order to accomplish this, language revitalization theory must reach out to disciplines that have strong voices from the margins. The voices of the queer, feminine, and people of color have long since begun their work in deconstructing a variety of fields like feminism and literature, and those voices can help reshape the field of social linguistics so power structures and the dynamics of infinite time can become incorporated in planning processes. In addition, the soul-crushing scars of worldwide colonization and genocide should be further explored so that all those involved in building movements and working towards linguistic equity can understand the use of terms like beaten persons syndrome and work towards creating spaces that nurture and protect existing speakers while finding the paths that will create speakers in the future.

#### **4.5 Meta-cognition & Hyperconsciousness**

Incorporating these theories also requires *meta-cognition* and *hyperconsciousness*. If gender

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<sup>10</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Library. Kindle Edition, 2015, Kindle Location 583.

equality is going to be created in Indigenous communities where it does not exist, then white feminism will not have all the answers and can create distortions that privilege whiteness while silencing the Indigenous. Many Indigenous organizations have adopted their structure and methodologies from the oppressor. Instead of traditional forms of governance, we have boards and councils that use the same titles as corporations and federal agencies; instead of Indigenous educational structures, we build schools that indigenize Euroamerican methodologies instead of starting from a place of family, clan, land, and relationships. We can see other disciplines call for the creation of their own methodologies by rejecting oppressive power structures, as in the following excerpt by Audre Lorde:

Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference—those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older—know that *survival is not an academic skill*. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. *For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.<sup>11</sup>

In order to achieve hyperconsciousness, one must be continuously aware of the complexities of time and space when it comes to having a consciousness free of oppression while one's people live in a state of oppression. While it is true that in many places oppression is not the brute force it once was, we would be living a lie if we subscribed to the idea that it has lessened in terms of effectiveness to destroy languages, cultures, and people through a self-sustaining cultural hegemony.

#### **4.6 Revolutionary Self-Love**

In neo-colonial North America, for example, oppression is often sustained through processes of omission that are so normalized that questioning them may seem bizarre or extreme, and is often

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<sup>11</sup> Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007, 112.

countered with phrases like “we cannot privilege any group based on ethnicity” when it is that very ethnicity that made them targets for elimination in genocidal eras of American history. A plethora of anti-Indigenous legislation and institutional practices, such as those at boarding and residential schools have an everlasting effect even though they have been shut down for decades and are even being condemned as atrocities in governmental apologies, such as that of Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, who issued the following statement after receiving the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: “The Indian residential school system, one of the darkest chapters in Canadian history, has had a profoundly lasting and damaging impact on Indigenous culture, heritage, and language. As a father and a former teacher, I am overwhelmingly moved by these events.”<sup>12</sup> An effective metaphor of genocidal policies and actions of North American governments might be a group of people pouring poisonous chemicals into a lake every day for fifty years. Even if they stop pouring them, and even if they admit doing so was a terrible idea, the effects will continue until a dedicated and coordinated clean up plan is implemented.

Therefore, we cannot continue to assume we are not ourselves poisoned and in need of monitoring and antidotes found in our languages and the thought worlds of our ancestors. When dealing with the psychology that is the aftershocks of centuries of oppression, the metaphor becomes oversimplification:

As Fishman (1997, 194) has pointed out, endangered languages become such because they lack informal intergenerational transmission and informal daily life support, not because they are not being taught in schools or lack official status. Nevertheless, because official policies banning or restricting the use of certain languages have been seen as agents of assimilation, if not also by some such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) as tantamount to acts of genocide, it is no wonder that hopes of reversing language shift have so regularly been pinned on them.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, 312), for example, maintains that unsupported coexistence mostly ...

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<sup>12</sup> “Statement by Prime Minister on Release of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” *Prime Minister of Canada*. Last modified December 15 2015, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2015/12/15/statement-prime-minister-release-final-report-truth-and-reconciliation-commission>.

leads to minority languages dying.<sup>13</sup>

As language death marches continue, they do so in relative isolation and an inhumane cloaking of secrecy. History books in American public education completely ignore the tortures employed by federal employees, teachers, and religious leaders in order to enforce American genocide. Indigenous communities must always search for the norm, the default, and remove the illusion of its reasonable existence. An analysis of the unstated language policy reveals the cultural hegemony, which assumes white superiority:

As Fishman (2001a, 454) comments, “even the much vaunted ‘no language policy’ of many democracies is, in reality, an anti-minority-languages policy, because it delegitimizes such languages by studiously ignoring them, and thereby, not allowing them to be placed on the agenda of supportable general values”. Proponents of what is sometimes called ‘benign neglect’ ignore the fact that minorities experience disadvantage that majority members do not face.<sup>14</sup>

Visualizing and comprehending the interconnected webs of oppression is similar to using English to describe the complexities of Tlingit grammar, which led elder K̄aakligé Norman James to state: «ch’u uwayáa aḵ tundatáani kamdlíxís’ wé geiwú tin» (it is as if my mind got tangled in a seine net).<sup>15</sup>

Because of this, we return to the Indigenous consciousness. There are not enough metaphors to describe the post-apocalyptic world that exists in the footprint of American genocide. In the midst of these complexities, meta-cognition and hyperconsciousness offer tools for the Indigenous community to begin a liberation that exists through values that unite and protect instead of dividing and isolating in a hypercompetitive hegemonic culture that demands a winner, a GOAT (greatest of all time), and continually pits two opposing sides in opposition where there must be a fatal conflict and a victor who is graced by the path of the almighty.

The Tlingit people are connected by waterways in a temperate rainforest. The geography and climate of Lingít Aaní (Tlingit territory) force those traveling by canoe to be prepared to seek

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13 Romaine, Suzanne. “The Impact of Language Policy on Endangered Languages.” *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, Vol. 4.2 (2002): 194.

14 Romaine, Suzanne. “The Impact of Language Policy on Endangered Languages,” 198.

15 James, Norman. personal communication.

shelter from inclement weather and rough seas. Every navigable route has shelters where canoes can paddle into in case the conditions are unsafe. The people can camp in these places until it is safe, and in Tlingit they are called déili (shelter from weather; safe harbor).<sup>16</sup> This noun derives from the verb root  $\sqrt{\text{deil}}$ , which means “to watch” or “to guard” and give these resting places a sense of agency as protectors from the elements. This concept can apply to the development of safe speaking environments for Indigenous languages. Wherever American Indigenous languages exist, there are children being raised in war zones. The rubble is not war-torn ghosts of buildings, but are fragmented communities and people unsure of themselves and reluctant to name their oppressor and fight back with love of each other and their languages. Because of that, we say ch'a haa káx yan has agadeil—let them just watch over us. The “them” in this case relies on the concept of deep time, calling upon everyone who has ever lived with the language, everyone who is living with it now, and everyone who ever will live with it. In Tlingit stories, the trickster Raven often utilizes a hortative verb (let it happen) when making a spiritual wish for something. Indigenous communities can make those wishes as well, calling upon everything that could ever exist in its own consciousness in order to gain the strength and energy to embrace a revolutionary love.

In the safe acquisition environments for Indigenous languages, no individual is more important than any other and anyone engaging in destructive and limiting behaviors will be corrected with loving guidance. The ability to resist micro-oppressions will help the group resist macro-oppressions, and it all begins with the speech act. Every member of the movement should understand that knowledge of the language is not enough, that documentation of the language is not enough. It must come out of the mouths of all who are willing to use it, and that their actions breathe life into the language and pull it back from the edges of oblivion.

Indigenous hyperconsciousness allows the group to be ever-aware of the impacts of colonial oppression, and meta-cognition allows for the constructive analysis of the self and group in order to identify useful colonial phenomena and soundly reject limiting and destructive phenomena. The result, over time and with ongoing practice and implementation of revolutionary love, is Indigenous

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<sup>16</sup> Leer, Jeff, Doug Hitch, and John Ritter. *Interior Tlingit Noun Dictionary: The Dialects Spoken by Tlingit Elders of Carcross and Teslin, Yukon, and Atlin, British Columbia* (Whitehorse: Yukon Native Language Centre, 2001), M·89

counterhegemonic transformation. Communities may need to have ceremonies to release their own micro-oppressions and macro-oppressions. Language warriors will have to engage in dialogues within the Indigenous community and in the surrounding communities to call attention to these oppressions and the need to eliminate them so we have life instead of massive death.

Members of the language movement must operate in a state of continuous connection to one another, to healing energies, and to the act of resistance. By creating these environments, fluency rates will rise quicker, the language will be used for more things by more people, and the dismal numbers that forecast language death will become a myth, a story told a long time from now about the time when all was almost lost for a people. In the counterhegemonic world, we can see that a single language lost in Indigenous America is an immeasurable tragedy. There will continue to be oppressors, who enact their violence through ignoring, silencing, othering, and diminishing, but they will lose their power because the soil is Indigenous, the air is Indigenous. The languages of this place have always existed, and by embracing Indigenous value implementation, by defending Indigenous consciousness, by understanding and living by a revolutionary love, these languages will continue to exist. Cultural hegemony is the lie that drives language death, and lies can be dispelled by strength of spirit and the seeds that were planted in the places where single trees became forests over and over again in eternal time.



# 5

## Mending a People and Their Language

Kusaxán ka Tula.aan tin Yagaxtoodláak

*We Are Going to Succeed With Love and Kindness*

Hél ldakát ka Lingít ax'ei.aaxch.  
Yaa nanáan haa yoo x'atángi.  
Haa laaxw ...

Yóo tliyaa áa dultín nooch.  
Haa yoo x'atula.átgi.  
Hél aax has asawu.aax.  
Ch'a wáa sá awoonéiyi,  
du een aa  
aa sá áa yéi teeyi  
yá yoo x'atánk,  
kaa éet dultóow.  
Has du een aa  
kaakwt uwanéi aa,  
Yanéekw,  
néekw du kát woogoodí,  
aagáa á tsá a daa l najélch.  
Yá ...  
Lingít yoo x'atángi káx ...  
Xát, ax xáni aa,  
daat yá yées ku.óo, yá yées káa  
Máa sá x'agáxtunookw.  
Haa du tuwáax' áyá s sigóo du ée toolatóowu.  
Kux áyá l has oo.aat.

No one understands Tlingit yet.  
Our language is dying.  
We're starving ...

Over there, people always watch it.  
Our speaking.  
They don't hear it.  
It is done whichever way,  
with those ones,  
whoever is there  
this language,  
is taught to people.  
Those ones with them  
something happened those ones.  
Sickness,  
sickness come over that person  
and only then it is not carried around.  
This ...  
for Tlingit language ...  
Me, the ones that come to me,  
the new people, the young people.  
How we want a taste of it.  
We want it, that we would teach them.  
They don't come back.

Ldakát áa yéi s yatee.  
Hél shawoodahéin ...

Áyá,  
yá “school”-x’ aa kaa ee dultóow.  
Yaa s anaskwéin yá adátx’i.  
Xát ku.aa,  
ax toowú yéi nateech  
tlax a yáanax aa wé Dleit Kaa x’éinax.  
Lingít x’éinax,  
yáat’aa,  
yáat’aa tsú,  
Dleit Kaa x’éinax.  
Yá Lingít yoo x’ayatánk,  
a daat Dleit Kaa x’éinax  
has du een kadunik nooch.  
Hél aadé s ooṣsikóowu ye.  
Ách áwé,  
yá “school” áwe  
áa has du ee dultóow.  
Yá al’eix tsú,  
ax’ has du éet dultóow.  
A ku.aa yaa s ayanadlák.  
Lingít x’éinax yoo has x’ali.átk.  
Yá aadé ...  
yá yeedát ...  
hél woosh tin yéi jituné.  
Yá ...  
yáat’aa has át al’eixí ...  
daakw.aa shí?  
Aadóo sá  
yá shí has awsikóo?  
Hél aadé átx sh k’uxdliyeti yé.  
Yá a daa yadukaa nooch.  
Hél áyá yéi áwé at shí.  
Xát ku.aa ax toowúch aa yéi yatee.  
Haa yátx’i ka haa dachxánx’i sáani káx,  
Woosh tin yéi jinaxtudinéiyi.  
Yá Lingít x’asheeyi.  
Hél woosh ee at tushgéik.  
Woosh tin,  
yandé haa kwaják.  
A yáanax á ...  
ch’as tle ...  
«haa aayí, haa aayí

All the ones living there.  
There are not many ...

This is,  
at this school, people are being taught.  
They are beginning to learn, the children.  
But me,  
I always feel  
there is way too much English.  
In Tlingit,  
this one,  
this one, too,  
in English.  
This Tlingit language,  
it is always talked  
about to them in English.  
There is no way they can know it.  
Because of that,  
this school,  
they are taught there.  
And dancing, too,  
it is taught to them there.  
And despite it, they are succeeding.  
They are talking in Tlingit.  
Then ...  
now ...  
we are not working together.  
This ...  
this one, they are dancing there ...  
which song?  
Who  
knows this song?  
There is no way it can be lied about.  
This is always said about it.  
This is not how it is with songs.  
Me, though, my feelings are there.  
For our children and our grandchildren,  
let’s work together.  
This Tlingit singing.  
We are not stingy with each other.  
Being together,  
will be perfect.  
It is too much ...  
when it’s just ...  
“that’s ours, that’s ours

at sheeyí»  
 kasiyé áyá.  
 Hél aadé áṭ sh k'ux̣dliyeli yé.  
 Hél ax̣ tuwáa ushgú yé.  
 Aadóo sá áṭ liyéix̣ ...  
 hél ch'a yáat'aa haa dachxánx'i yán,  
 ka haa kéilk'i hás yá aayix̣ sitee  
 A kát yoo ixkéede  
 áa yéi yatee.  
 Ách áwé a yáx̣ x'ayaxakaa  
 woosh tin,  
 kei haa guxlatséen, woosh tin.  
 Yá,  
 Gunanaa xánde,  
 kuxatéeni  
 yéi has du éex' x'axataa:  
 woosh tin yéi jinaxtudane!  
 Aagáa kei haa guxlatséen.  
 Hél Dleit Káa ch'a haa kakgwa.aakw  
 Uháan ch'as at kagax̣too.áakw  
 Ách áwé ...  
 latséendein  
 yá kaa ée dultóow yá "school"-x'  
 ka ch'a ldakát yé ...

Ch'a yéi xat gasigéink'i aa,  
 yá ax̣ sáni hás ka ax̣ káak hás,  
 aadé s xat naux̣ch.  
 Yá ku.éex' yéi yaa naix̣i.  
 Áa yéi s xat daayakaa nooch:  
 yisikáa yánde gax̣tootaan.  
 Hél yéi jineiýi.  
 i gu.aa yáx x'wán!  
 Aadáx̣ áwé xwsikóo:  
 yá naa káanix̣ satee  
 Ax̣ léelk'u hás ...  
 ax̣ náḱ has woonát.  
 Ch'a l kuḱastéeji.  
 Ch'as ax̣ éesh ka ax̣ tláa  
 hás áyá áa yéi yatee,  
 yá aan ká.  
 Yá ...  
 káx kawduwashée yá  
 ax̣ sáni hás, ax̣ káak hás,  
 ax̣ léelk'u hás

the song"  
 it is strange.  
 There's no way to lie about it.  
 I don't want it that way.  
 Whoever is using it ...  
 not just this one, our grandchildren,  
 and our maternal nephews, it belongs to them.  
 On it, heading downstream,  
 at that place.  
 Because of this, I am saying:  
 together,  
 we will be strong, together.  
 This,  
 towards the Athabaskan people,  
 when I travel there,  
 I tell them:  
 let's work together!  
 And then we will become strong.  
 We will just try it without English.  
 Us, we are just going to try it.  
 Because of that ...  
 strongly  
 it will be taught at the school  
 and everywhere ...

I was just a little one,  
 these paternal uncles and maternal uncles of mine,  
 they always brought me there.  
 There would be a ku.éex'.  
 They always said to me there:  
 you are asked to speak at the end of it.  
 This is not work.  
 Have strength and courage!  
 From this, I knew it:  
 being a naa káani.  
 My grandparents ...  
 died off from me.  
 Before I was born.  
 Just my father and my mother,  
 they lived there,  
 on this land.  
 This ...  
 it is found,  
 my paternal uncles, my maternal uncles,  
 my grandparents

yá áx'  
yanáx kawdudzihaa.  
Tléix' yateeyí áa ax saayí,  
du eedáx xat wuduwasaa.  
Tánk' ka Shaayí Éesh.  
Déix yatee ax saayí.  
Shaayí Éesh ka Tánk'.  
Ayáx yéi jiduneiyi,  
aagáa áwé déix saax'w xat yéix' datee ...

A xoo aa yéi s daayadukáayin:  
«ldakát át áyá yisikóo.»  
Kut kei naxix ch'áakw aadé yateeyí ye.  
Yisikóo gé?  
Hél woosh yéi tudashí yá yeedát.  
X'aan kíknáx.  
X'aan kíknáx.  
Yéi has yateeyí ch'as yá yées ku.oo.  
Ch'áakw,  
heen tooyáayin adátx'ix has sateeyí.  
Yaa wdisháni áa ku.oo.  
Has du éex' tudasheeyín.  
Hél dáanaa káx.  
Has wuwáat  
ách áyá has du éex tudasheeyín.  
Wáanganeens sáyá gút haa jéex gadatí.  
Gút shoowú.  
Ka wé town haa kuntutínch.

A yáanáx xá Dleit Káa x'atu.áxch dé.  
Ch'áakw hél Dleit Káa haa xoo.  
Ách áwé,  
yées kaa has du yoo dudlitóow  
Lingít x'éináx yoo x'atán  
Ka ...  
yá Lingít kusteeeyí.  
Ách áyá,  
woosh tin yéi s jineiyín.  
Yeedát ku.aa hóoch'.  
Dáanaa yaa s akalnúkjin.  
Ch'a daa sá haa tuwáa sigóo yáat.  
Yá aan ká.  
Al'eix.  
Dleit Káa al'eixi.  
ANB Hall-x'

this, they are here,  
buried in the ground.  
There was one, my namesake,  
from him I was named.  
Tánk' and Shaayí Éesh.  
There are two of them, my names.  
Shaayí Éesh ka Tánk'.  
Working correctly,  
and then two names were put on me ...

Among them, people used to say:  
“you know it all.”  
The ancient ways are getting lost.  
Do you know?  
We don't help each other nowadays.  
Along with anger.  
Along with anger.  
That is how they are, just these young ones.  
Long ago,  
we used to pack water, those who are kids.  
The villagers who are old.  
We used to help them.  
Not for money.  
They aged,  
and because of that we used to help them.  
Sometimes they would give us a dime.  
A nickel.  
And we would always go to town.

We understand too much English now.  
Long ago we were not among the whites.  
Because of that,  
the young people learned  
Tlingit in the Tlingit language.  
And ...  
this Tlingit culture.  
Because of this,  
they used to work together.  
Now, though, it's all gone.  
They never wanted money.  
Anything they wanted was here.  
Here on the land.  
Dancing.  
White people's dancing.  
At the ANB Hall

yaa gaxíxch  
daat xá, *social basket*.  
Dáanaa yaa s haa linúks.  
Áyá,  
hél yéi at wootee de.  
Ch'a daa sá, ch'a daa sá  
has tuwáa sigóo.  
Dáanaa. Dáanaa.  
Gaklyéixi.  
Ách áwé,  
yaa s oonuk wé dáanaa  
Hél Dleit Káa x'éináx has daa sá s awaskoo.  
Ch'a aan kwa haa yáanáx has x'asitoo.  
Ách áwé ...  
ldakát át yaa s ayagadlkájin.  
Yá,  
haa kusteeyí kut kei naxíx.  
Aa xoo ash ku.áakw  
kux yatoodlaagi.  
Hél aadé tléináx  
tléináx kaach ayakgwadlaak.  
Woosh tin yéi jitunéiyi,  
kei haa guxlatséen.  
Yéi áyá.  
Ch'áagu aa yéi s daa x'ayakaayin  
Yéil yéi aawaáa.

Ách áwé  
ch'a yéi gugéink' xwasikoo hél ldakát xwasikoo.  
Lingít,  
ch'áagu áyá Lingít,  
yoo s x'ala.átgi.  
Has du x'éix xasa.aax.

Tléináx káa shaan áwé,  
*wheelchair* kát át kawdijóox, *Sitka*.  
Át kuwataawatín wé *parties*,  
ax káani tin wé *party*.  
Áwé neil shoowdijúx wé *ANB Hall*.  
Kúnax wudishán.  
Du xánt xwagút.  
«Shaay Éesh yéi xat duwasáakw.  
Jilkáat Kwáan áyá xát.  
Ax keek'átsk'u!  
Káx yidigút ax kéek'átsk'u.

it always happens  
about it, you see, "social basket."  
Money is just for sweets for us.  
This is,  
it is not like that now.  
Just whatever, just whatever  
they want.  
Money. Money.  
Let him/her make it.  
Because of that,  
they didn't want money.  
They did not know about English.  
Yet they have more answers than we do.  
Because of that ...  
they always used to acquire everything.  
This,  
our culture is becoming lost.  
Some people, though, try  
to acquire it back.  
There is no one person,  
one person will not succeed.  
Our working together,  
will make us strong.  
This is how it is.  
Long ago, they used to say about it:  
Raven said it.

Because of that,  
I know a little bit that I don't know it all.  
Humans,  
the Tlingit of long ago,  
they speak.  
I listen to their voices.

This one old person,  
would wheel around in a wheelchair in Sitka.  
He would travel around to parties,  
at my in-laws' party.  
He wheeled into the ANB Hall.  
He was really old.  
I went by him.  
"I am called Shaay Éesh.  
I am a person from Jilkáat.  
My child younger brother!  
You came along it, my child younger brother.

Yá Dleit Káach yéi ayasáakw *respect*.  
Yaa at wooné. Kúnáx áyá.  
Du tóogaa wootee du xánt xwaagoodí.  
Ch'u yéi xat daayaká:  
«kéek'átsk'u kux yidigút!»

In English this is called respect.  
Respect. It really is.  
It pleased him that I went by him.  
And then he just says to me:  
“child-brother, you came back.”

Át tsú,  
hél haa jee  
ulcheen yáa  
woosh yáa wudané.  
Hél woosh yáa wutudané.  
Yóot yatulgéin  
«wáa sá» haa yéi dukaaí.  
Ách áwé  
yéi x'ayáxaká:  
«woosh tin,  
woosh tin kei haa guxlatseen.»  
Yéi has daayaxaká yá  
Gunanaa aadé kuxatéeni:  
«woosh tin yéi jitooneiyí  
áyá kei haa guxlatseen.»  
– Tánk'

This too,  
in our possession  
it's weak, this  
respecting together.  
We don't respect each other.  
We look out at faces  
and people say to us: “what?”  
Because of that  
I say:  
“together,  
together we are going to gain strength.”  
I say this to them  
when I travel to the Athabascan people:  
“working together  
is how we will gain strength.”  
— Smitty Katzeek, Gaanaxteidí <sup>1</sup>

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## 5.1 The Discord of Violent Separations

The Tlingit people, language, land, and spirituality have been violently separated from one another. At one point all of these things were intertwined and held together through a concept called Haa Kusteeyí, which could translate as “our way of life” or “our culture,” but Dakl'aweidí elder Kaakligéi Norman James points out that it should be looked at more like “clan law.”<sup>2</sup> In order to achieve linguistic stability, those four things (people, language, land, spirituality) must be bandaged together and doing so requires processes of healing from cultural genocide and abandonment, and then conscious collective efforts to re-establish a place of high social value for language while creating new speakers and taking the language into new realms.

A wide variety of social shifts have resulted in a disastrous scenario: the critical mass of speakers, teachers, learners, researchers, and administrators may not have the unity or the resources to make

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<sup>1</sup> Katzeek, Smitty. “Tánk' X'éidax Áyá, Ishka Hít S'aatí, Gaanaxteidí, Tlákw Aan (Tlingit language).” Translated by X'unei Lance Twitchell. *YouTube*. Feb 21, 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnW4bo4lC7A>.

<sup>2</sup> James, Norman. Personal Communication.

sure that Tlingit gains more speakers than it loses. As previously mentioned, there are an estimated 130 speakers remaining, but what might be happening with the remaining 17,000<sup>3</sup> or so Tlingit people on earth regarding language choice? Are they aware that their language is vanishing, and are they prepared to embrace a shift of values, time, and energy needed to become speakers of the language? And what of the estimated 75,000 people in Tlingit territory?<sup>4</sup>

When 0.6% of the Tlingit population can speak the language, and 0.1% of the population in the region can speak the language, then the outlook is dismal and the chances of revitalization seem slim. On top of that, the fragmentation of the Tlingit language community creates roadblocks in the areas of disagreement over writing systems, teaching methods, pronunciation and meaning of words, and whether the language should change and how exactly that should take place.

To begin envisioning some of the critical social changes that must take place in order to achieve a goal of 5,000 Tlingit speakers in 20 years, then we might turn to the idea of what a language might be and how that language is valued and used by populations. In the *Kumu Honua Mauli Ola*—which is described as “A Native Hawaiian Educational Philosophy Statement”—the back cover contains the following quote:<sup>5</sup>

*‘O ka ‘ōlelo ke ka‘ā o ka mauli*

Language is the fiber that binds us to our cultural identity.

This is an encapsulating statement of the program, because it relies on a cultural metaphor of the twine that binds a hook to a line. It also summarizes the inseparable nature of language and culture. If a similar statement were created in Tlingit, one might say:

*wooch een kaawadaa haa yoo x‘atángi, haa aaní, ka uháan*

our language, land, and ourselves flow together

This helps to demonstrate how the language binds Tlingit people to the ocean, rivers, lakes, and lands

3 University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropolgy. “The Tlingit People Today.” nd. Penn Museum. [https://www.penn.museum/collections/shotridge/the\\_tlingit.html](https://www.penn.museum/collections/shotridge/the_tlingit.html)

4 Rain Coast Data. *Southeast Alaska by the Numbers* 2016. Juneau: Southeast Conference. September 2016, 1.

5 ‘Aha Pūnana Leo a me Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke’elikōlani. *Kumu Honua Mauli Ola: He Kālainana‘o Ho‘ona‘auao ‘Ōiwi Hawai‘i*. Hilo: ‘Aha Pūnana Leo a me Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke’elikōlani, 2009.

of their ancestral homelands, and to one another.

In order to bring Tlingit back to a place of safety, a number of programs and activities need to be initiated, and these must be coupled with a shift in cultural values for Tlingit people and the people who reside in Tlingit territory. In addition, communities, organizations, and individuals must make strides towards recovering from generations of trauma related to cultural identity and language: a shift from lateral violence to lateral love, focusing on elevating one another and protecting the language, its speakers, and its learners.

These activities can be executed with strategic language planning and policy activities that contribute to a Tlingit language movement that is a safe harbor for those inside, and a fortress against colonial forces that seek to derail language revitalization efforts. To put it simply: the language must become the place of choice and greatest clear benefit, and then everyone must be brought in and kept safe.

## **5.2 Best Practices for Language Revitalization**

One of the primary goals of language revitalization is to make sure there is a stable population of speakers—which most often means creating more speakers than are lost—and making sure the language is used in as many places as possible to communicate about as many things as possible. If a language is to regain its place in populations that reside on its ancestral territory, then language planning efforts should be specific, decisive, and informed by local, regional, statewide, and national power structures and social tendencies.

The situation of Alaska Native languages and their health & stability is complicated by colonialism, oppression, value shift, fragmentation, and institutional racism. Stabilizing Indigenous languages is never about the language in isolation, because language stability requires dramatic social shift in the face of historical and ongoing marginalization and hierarchies of racial and therefore linguistic superiority. As Margaret Noor states in her article on language activities in Anishinaabemowin: “Ultimately, saving a language that is endangered as a result of racism is in fact a battle with racism itself. Families and communities can come together or disassemble as a



result of making a commitment to face and change racism.”<sup>6</sup> As we begin to examine best practices and explore methods of replicating them in Alaska, care should be taken to consider the ways that colonialism has impacted communities and the ways that coloniality creates ongoing oppressions for Indigenous languages and their speaking communities.

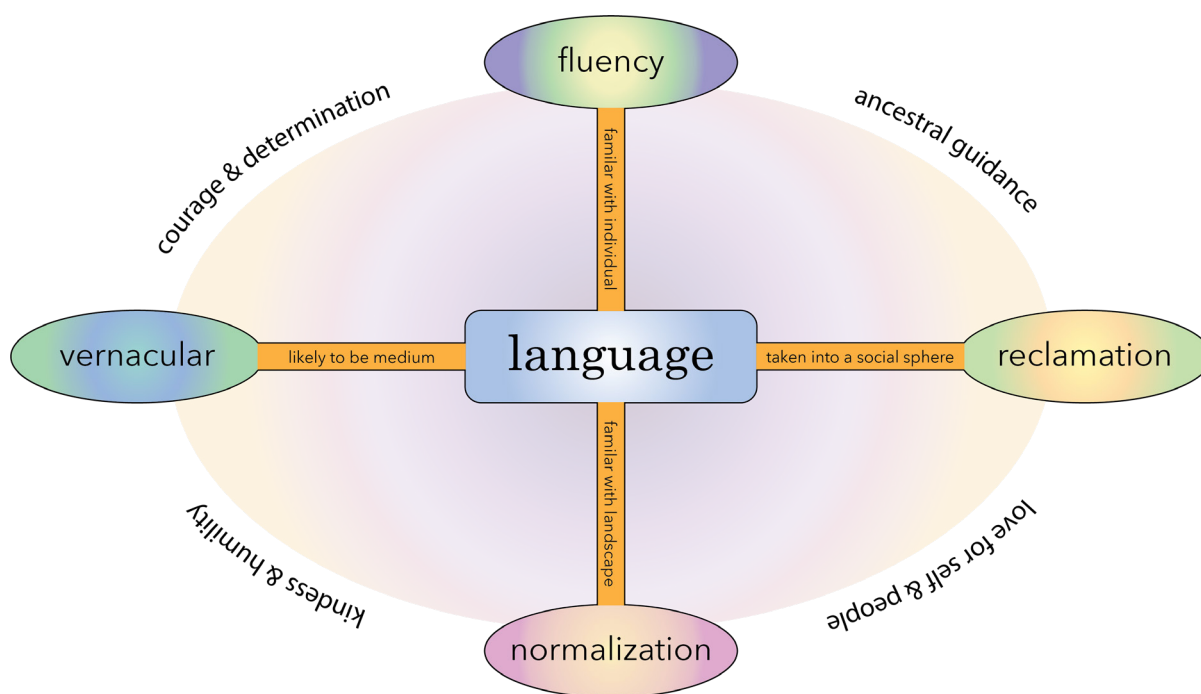


Figure 10: Spheres of Language Revitalization

While the social dynamics and stability of all languages vary dramatically, the path to language stability can be represented by Figure 10. A living language can be analyzed in the following areas:

- **fluency** is how familiar the language is to its population; how likely is a person in the language community to understand what is being said or to communicate what they would like to say?
- **normalization** is how familiar the language is with the landscape; how likely is a person to encounter the language in written and spoken forms in various places, and what expectations are placed upon people to know the language?
- **reclamation** is the strategic identification of domains, which are places where the language

6 Noori, Margaret. “8: Anishinaabemowin Language, Family, and Community.” *Bringing Our Languages Home: Language Revitalization for Families*. Ed Leanne Hinton. Berkley: Heyday, 2013, 118.

should be taken; does the population know how to talk in detail about subjects (registers) in all the social and physical areas where it could be spoken (domains)?

- **vernacular** is the likelihood that the language is the language choice in given situations—the day to day common language; how likely are speakers to use the language and stay in it regardless of domain or register?

### 5.3 Language Planning & Policy

Language planning is a deliberate and systematic attempt to influence the behavior of individuals in regards to language choices, and also to influence the health and use of specific languages.

Language policy refers to the ways that languages are chosen and used, and the active (written and spoken rules) and passive (behaviors) ways that languages function. These planning and policy activities are often viewed in three realms:

- **Micro** refers to individuals and families, and the focus is often on how to make an endangered language the language of choice.
- **Meso** is the community and region, and focus is often on how to make sure the language has its fair share of power and use.
- **Macro** refers to the state, federal, and international issues and attempts to influence policies regarding language use and presence.

Language communities should be making conscious choices in terms of the specific types of changes they are instigating, and in which of the realms they are making those changes. Some might argue that you focus on the micro first, then the meso, and then the macro, because the smaller spheres are more controllable and are sometimes referred to as a natural language environment. The argument one might hear in this regard is this: we don't need the school/government to change; what we need is for people to start speaking to their children at home. While this is in fact a truth, the levels of dissociation are severe enough that Indigenous languages are often foreign to their own populations to the point that language in the home is hardly possible when no speakers live in the home.

In addition to these areas, this document looks at strategies in terms of immediate (within the

next one to two years), near future (within the next three to five years), and distant future (within the next five to twenty years). Some strategies look at activities and others at behaviors, and also some focus on the language communities and others focus outside of the language community. One of the primary recommendations is to create a shift in the ways that our languages are valued by our people, which will take deliberate efforts that combat the generations of structural racism that Indigenous people have faced during the violence of colonialism. Language communities should focus on making language realms the place that people want to be, where everyone is safe and valued, and where efforts and accomplishments are recognized and celebrated in ways that avoid competition but instead embrace a universal uplifting of Indigenous peoples and their efforts.

Language planning efforts should keep these areas in mind, developing strategies to help in each area while employing relevant cultural values that create places where the language has social power and relevant use. In order to combat fragmentation—which is the division of a society into interest groups or political spheres—Indigenous populations must be able to put the health of the language at the forefront of its consciousness. Far too often Indigenous languages are used as a political tools during election seasons instead of the keys to spiritual and epistemological sovereignty that they are. In other cases, personal feelings of dislike or jealousy create divisions, arguments, and criticisms while languages continue to suffer in isolated pockets of fragmented peoples.

Bringing a language to stability means examining the social tendencies of its population and empowering its people to create a world where the language rises above fragmentation, colonial forces, standardized education, and racist hierarchies. Doing so requires regular dialogues that are rooted in respect but are unafraid to work through difficult topics and internal and external changes that are needed in order to create genuine and long-lasting change.

The strategies employed for establishing or maintaining language vitality will vary, but can generally fall into one of the following categories:

- **Language Maintenance** is intended for languages that already have stable fluency levels and places where the language is spoken. Efforts undertaken are intended to prevent language shift and loss.

- **Language Revitalization** is intended for languages that have low fluency levels and few places where the language is spoken. The goal of planning is to increase the number of speakers and the number of places where the language is used.
- **Language Revival** is intended for languages that no longer have fluent speakers or have so few fluent speakers that the language has to be reconstructed in order to make it a language of use and power.

The methods employed worldwide that have created the most positive changes for Indigenous languages involve the following areas of deliberate social change:

- **Language Nests.** These are efforts to create a home environment where children are raised entirely in the Indigenous language. The most notable examples are the Te Kōhanga Reo among the Māori of New Zealand and the 'Aha Pūnana Leo in Hawai'i, which have resulted in the creation of birth speakers of languages that were once critically endangered and now count their speakers in tens of thousands.
- **Language Medium Schools.** These are K-12 schools designed for children and families already using the language upon enrollment. They utilize the Indigenous language as the medium of education (teaching through the language as opposed to learning the language) for all subjects including English as an additional language and teach Indigenous language arts rather than English language arts. They are administered and operated through the language and hold parent meetings through the language. They differ from a more standard immersion school model where the focus is on teaching the language to non-speakers and English is the language other than in the immersion classroom. A pioneering example of this is the Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u (Nāwahī for short), which has a strong history of protesting standardized testing, and has maintained a 100% graduation rate and 80% college placement rate for the past 20 years.<sup>7</sup>
- **Adult Immersion Programs.** These are designed to create speakers out of adults who have

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<sup>7</sup> Wilson, William and Kaunoe Kamanā. "Insights from Indigenous Language Immersion in Hawai'i." *Immersion Education : Practices, Policies, Possibilities*. Ed. Diane J. Tedick, Donna Christian and Tara Williams Fortune. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011, 46.

some knowledge of the language and can commit to living in a language home for months to years at a time. The most successful example of this is the adult immersion program in the Mohawk language at Six Nations, which has created a new generation of language speakers and teachers and shifted their language program away from always translating to producing Indigenous language content.

- **Master-Apprentice Programs.** These are designed for languages with very few fluent speakers remaining, pairing them with intermediate-level speakers as employees whose job is to live with each other in the language while working. Successful examples come out of California, and were designed by emeritus UC Berkley linguist Leanne Hinton.
- **Language Education Programs.** These are education programs at various levels of education and in communities that are designed to create speakers through sequenced curriculum that teaches vocabulary and grammar through a variety of activities in and out of classrooms. This is the most common effort, and the successful programs can produce speakers who reach an intermediate-high level of understanding and speaking after two years.
- **Community Education & Awareness Programs.** These are programs that exist at the community level as “language circles” and other gatherings that are often informal and unstructured. They are often less intimidating than highly-structured programs.
- **Language Immersion Schools and Programs.** A language immersion school has two basic characteristics that differentiate it from most public schools in Alaska: use of the target language is a requirement (as is the limitation of use of English at times), and the language functions throughout the school curricula. An excellent example of this is the Ayaprun Elitnaurvik in Bethel, Alaska.<sup>8</sup> They may vary in terms of the amount of time targeted for immersion, as described below:
  - » **Total Immersion.** This model was developed to teach a second language to majority ethnic group English-speakers. It is called “total” immersion because the non-English language is used 100% of the time in the earliest grades, i.e., kindergarten and first grade, and then

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8 *Ayaprun Elitnaurvigmi*. Lower Kuskokwim School District. <http://ayaprun.lksd.org>

is gradually replaced with the use of English in subsequent grades for teaching specific academic content areas until by the end of elementary school students are taught 50% through the non-English language and 50% through English. Total immersion programs seldom continue beyond elementary school. Total immersion therefore differs from language medium school where 100% of the non-English language is used at all grades and continues on through high school. Another difference is that a total immersion program is administered and operated through English while a language medium school is administered and operated through the non-English language.<sup>9</sup>

- » **Bilingual Schools.** The goal is to speak the target language 50% of the time. Steps are taken at times to prevent the use of English, but teachers, staff, students, and parents are encouraged but not required to use the target language. Teachers and staff take note of which language is being used and find ways to encourage more use of the target language.
- **Culture-Based Education.** These programs often create an Indigenous cultural environment that contain important content and help prevent Indigenous students from being disoriented in Eurocentric institutions. As Bill Demmert, a national leader in education who was Tlingit and supported the development of Indigenous Language Medium schools, states:

The public school systems in each state may be defined as Generic (because they are designed to meet the academic needs of all students without regard to the racial or ethnic mix of students served by each local school. In many cases it may be appropriate to define the public schools as Culture Specific because many believe public schools reflect the cultural mores and priorities of middle class America. In either case the language of instruction is English with limited opportunity to learn one's heritage language or one's indigenous language if that language is other than English.<sup>10</sup>

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9 Fortune, Tara Williams. "What the Research Says About Immersion." Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA). *University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus*. Retrieved from [http://carla.umn.edu/immersion/documents/ImmersionResearch\\_TaraFortune.html](http://carla.umn.edu/immersion/documents/ImmersionResearch_TaraFortune.html)

10 Demmert, William G. "What is Culture-Based Education? Understanding Pedagogy and Curriculum." *Honoring Our Heritage: Culturally Appropriate Approaches for Teaching Indigenous Students*. Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University, 2011. Retrieved from <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/jar/HOH/HOH-1.pdf>

Culture-based education often teach Indigenous languages similar to foreign language programs and are a small percentage of the overall curriculum of the institution. Because of these restrictions, proficiency beyond recognition and use of memorized words and phrases is rarely achieved. Developing immersion programs is difficult for highly endangered languages, but Culture Based Education (CBE) programs should not be confused for language immersion programs. When the term “immersion” is used to refer to these programs, it creates a false belief that students are functioning in an environment where the non-English language exists in equity when it actually does not. Programs that function at less than 50% of the time in the non-English language are not “immersion.” This is important to note, because according to: “Students from full immersion programs are generally more proficient in reading, writing, listening, and speaking the second language than those from partial immersion programs. Partial immersion students, in turn, are more proficient than students who are taught the second language in traditional foreign language classes.”<sup>11</sup>

One way to envision language planning activities is in four interconnected spheres: planning, maintenance, status, and corpus. These are shown and described in Figure 11, which is adopted from the article “Issues for a Model of Language Planning” by Ayo Bamgbose.<sup>12</sup> Instigating and maintaining social change in extremely hegemonic environments that were built upon principles of racism and elimination of Indigenous cultures requires a wide variety of approaches and methodologies, which is the reason for presenting a plurality of methods and points of view for reversing language shift.

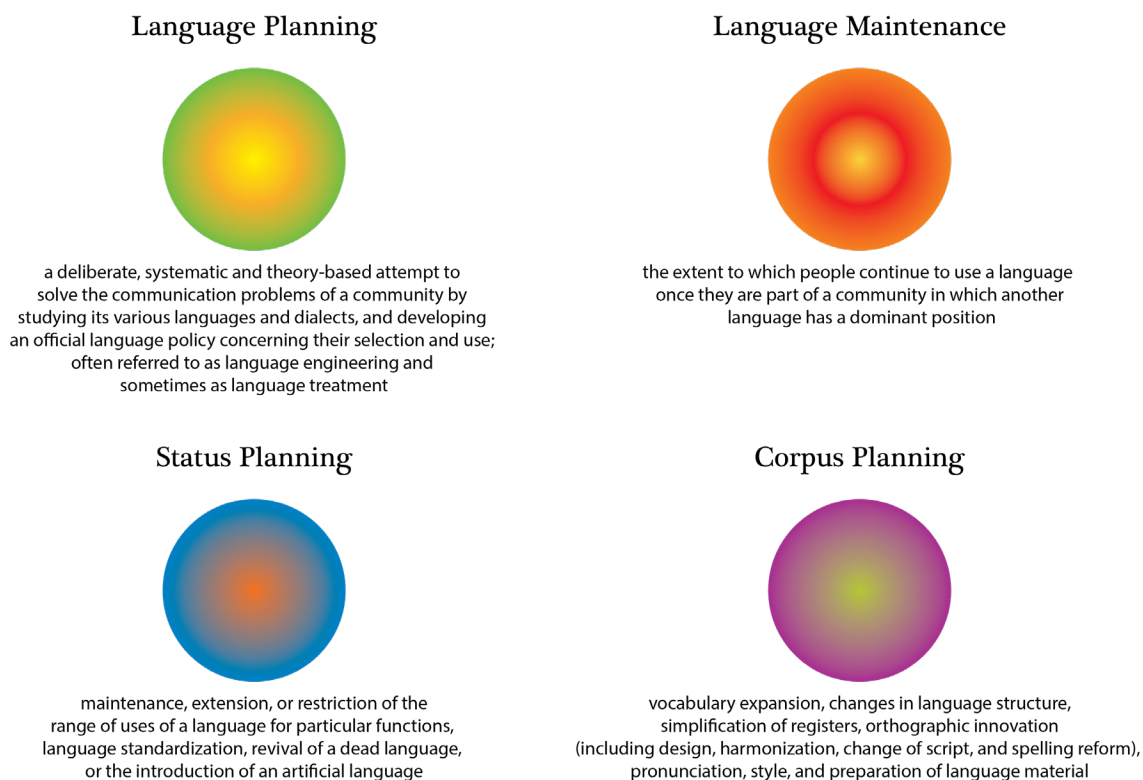
#### 5.4 Instigating Cultural Shift

Social and structural changes are necessary at all levels and in various spheres. There is no singular plan or model that fits all languages, but in fact a variety of ideas and approaches are needed so language advocates can strategize which areas to work upon, how that work will be done, and who will be doing it. At the micro level, a place of focus should be on domain reclamation, which means

<sup>11</sup> Brondum, Jack and Nancy Stenson. “Types of Immersion Education: An Introduction.” The ACIE Newsletter 1:2 (February 1998). Retrieved from [https://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol1/Feb1998\\_ImmersTypes.html](https://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol1/Feb1998_ImmersTypes.html)

<sup>12</sup> Bamgbose, Ayo. “Issues for a Model of Language Planning.” *Language Problems and Language Planning* 13.1 (1989), 24–34.






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Figure 11: Language Planning and Maintenance

language advocates identify physical and social spaces where the language needs to be brought into, and then they develop ways to bring the language into that place. One example might be this: people express a desire to raise their children in the language, but the parents are not fully fluent speakers. In order to make this idea a reality, then resources and methods must be developed that bring the language into the home. This could be in the form of language kits, which help label nouns in the Indigenous language and include common phrases for each room of the home or for situations.

As Figure 12 shows, which is based upon theories in the article, “Domains and the Relationship Between Micro- and Macrosociolinguistics” by Joshua Fishman,<sup>13</sup> domain reclamation requires social engineering where the physical and social space must be transformed to become one that accommodates Indigenous language use. For communities that are trying to keep their languages connected to their generations and places, then the home must become the ultimate target, but in order to keep the language there or to move it back into the homes of its people, then complex

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<sup>13</sup> Fishman, Joshua. “Domains and the Relationship Between Micro- and Macrosociolinguistics,” in *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*. Reprint. Ed. John Gumperz and Dell Hymes, 435-453. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986 (Original 1972).



theories are often needed to visualize the abstract relationships of people, values, needs, habits, activities, spaces, and languages.

The complexities of engineering and maintaining Indigenous language revitalization were discussed at length in the summer of 2016 during a class called “Language Policy and Language Practice with a Focus on Endangered/Indigenous Languages” at Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani. Faculty

members Scott Saft and William Wilson led

discussions with cohort members Tehota’kerá:tonh Jeremy Green from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory and the Kanyen’kéha language revitalization movement, and tinakpáhng Jimmy Teria of the Guam Department of Education’s Chamorro Studies and Special Projects Division. During the semester we collectively developed a set of theories we believed would assist Indigenous communities with the development and maintenance of Indigenous language revitalization movements.

There are two overarching concepts that seek to unite Indigenous language revitalization theory with the thought world of the language that it is concerning. The first is **Indigenous counterhegemonic transformation**, which seeks to expel cultural guilt & shame, external value systems, racist hierarchies & structures, and lateral oppression & violence by embracing respect, healthy communication, kindness, and unfragmented existence. This is shown in Figure 13, and at the center of this illustration is Indigenous hyperconsciousness, which is a theory of Indigenous awareness that operates simultaneously in multiple times and spaces, superseding individualism and fragmented viewpoints of reality, and is based in the thought world of Indigenous languages of particular places. This critical lens can be used in analyses of colonial forces that continually attempt to reshape Indigenous consciousness in relation to the Euroamerican ways of knowing, and operates in continuous hyper-awareness of those invasive consciousnesses.

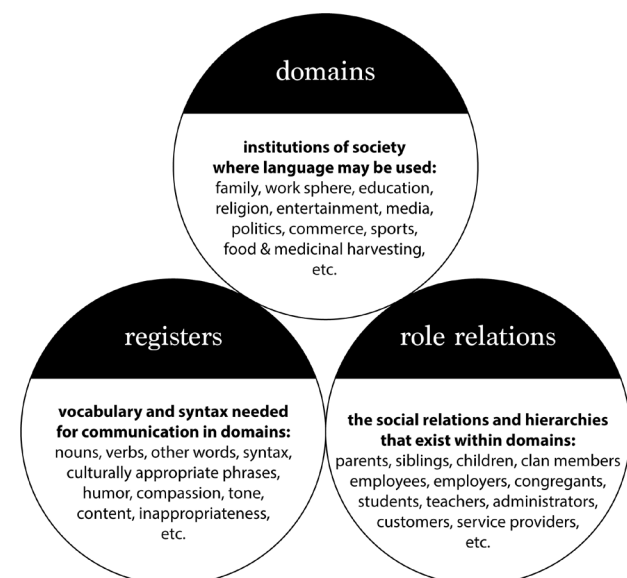


Figure 12: Domains, Registers, & Role Relations

One of the major obstacles to creating positive change is a barrage of criticisms and general negativity from the Indigenous community itself, but advocates of Indigenous languages should see these activities as the symptoms of colonial fragmentation and the social & psychological damage of generations of torture and genocide. The questions for those working in the language are plentiful, such as: How do we keep everyone on the same page? How do we avoid hurting each other and still engage in debates on where to focus and how to teach and document the language? How do we maintain control of our language and not yield to the expertise of those coming in from outside our language communities? How do we avoid fragmented identity politics that result in painful arguments about who should or should not be doing things in our communities to the point that little or nothing gets done? There is no series of answers that will fit the various situations of languages and their communities. However, we can share in a common theoretical space in order to begin seeing the way towards language health and continuity, and it starts with this: there is no time, energy, or people to waste, so we need to find ways to overcome the colonial fragmentation and disorder that has been placed upon our peoples and communities.

Some of the mechanisms that maintain colonial structures at the expense of Indigenous ones are represented in Figure 13, and while the complexities of social and psychological phenomena mean that one-size fits all descriptions are likely impossible, they are generalized here and can be adapted to fit the Indigenous thought world that is contained within an Indigenous language and its population.

- **Cultural guilt & shame** refers to a wide variety of ways that individuals and groups might feel guilt or shame about their relationship to themselves and Indigenous languages. There have been times in my life when

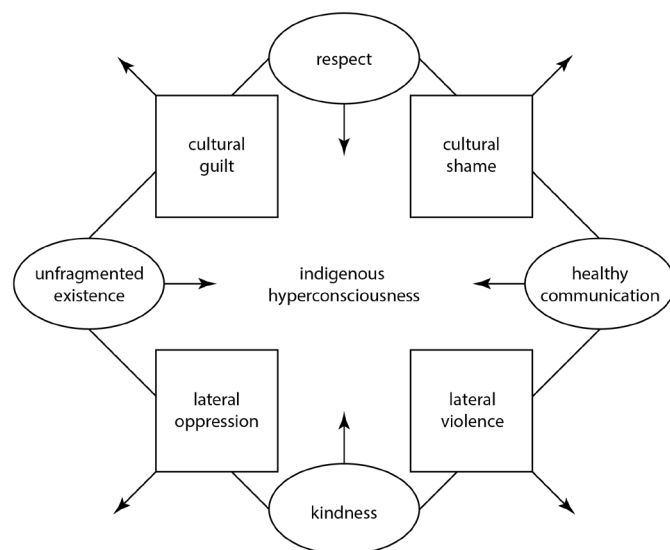


Figure 13: Indigenous Counterhegemonic Transformation

I have told people in various places and in various ways that they should learn and use their own language. More than once, the response to this has been, “you have made me feel bad about not knowing my language.” This is a result of an alienation from ones own language, and the identity crises that could result from the conflicting spaces of what one knows, wishes they knew, is expected to know, and feels like they cannot have access to knowing. All of this is compounded by the historical trauma of colonial violences and a perception of diminished value that results from external values and racist hierarchies & structures.

- **External value systems** refer to social complexities of value system displacement as a result of colonialism. While addressing value systems, it is important to remain aware of the colonial methodology of the “take it or leave it zero sum game” mentality where colonial and Indigenous structures are misrepresented as two opposing parts of an extremely limited binary where one is forced to choose in whole one or the other. The ways this mentality is presented varies, but might sound like this: 1) You enjoy a heated house, don't you? As if one has to move back to wood heat only in order to bring their language back to a safe place, 2) any sort of argument that suggests you are doing your population a disservice by using your language because they are going to fall behind in their English skills or will be non-competitive in a colonial and capitalistic world. The idea presented here is more nuanced than a simplistic binary argument of one thing or the other. Indigenous hyperconsciousness means continually rejecting the idea of binary reduction and instead pushes for plurality. By rejecting external value systems, the Indigenous language population is looking inward to the value systems that were handed down to them through their language and using that as a starting point. Indigenous value systems are not rigid and unchanging, and can be adapted as its population sees fit, and external value systems can be harvested for things that are useful and wanted by the Indigenous language population.
- **Racist hierarchies & structures** are deeply entrenched in the consciousness of individuals and in public institutions in the colonial nations—such as the United States—that have never reconciled violent acts of colonialism and the resulting coloniality. In order to remove

people from their land, laws were enacted or court decisions made that were often based upon a fictionalized binary structure of civilized and uncivilized, where the civilized European nations knew what was best, were instructed by God, and were the only ones who could claim the rights to lands, courts, and social system development and implementation. One of the lasting effects of these categories is that the knowledge systems of the European Settler is standardized and normalized while the knowledge systems of the Indigenous peoples are othered, excluded, and often misunderstood and ignored.

- **Lateral oppression & violence** can be summed up as the oppressed keeping themselves in a state of oppression, and is common in Indigenous communities. Excellent definitions can be found in a webinar presentation by Cecilia Fire Thunder, President of the Oglala Lakota Nation Education Coalition, which define the following:
  - » **Lateral violence:** the expression of rage and anger, fear and terror that can only be safely vented upon those closest to us when we are being oppressed. Those who oppress us do not hear us nor do they assist us in changing the oppression-therefore it's unsafe for us to speak to them.
  - » **Lateral Oppression:** Organized, harmful behaviors that we do to each other within our oppressed group: within our families, organizations, workplace and within our communities.<sup>14</sup>

In order to facilitate the rejection of these phenomena, the following basic operating philosophies will become focal points for the ways to engage one another and those who are encountering the Indigenous language community. Language advocates should be able to identify what these traits are within the thought world of their ancestors, and be mindful of not falling into stereotyped patterns of “the Indian Way” that might be misrepresented in mass media. Again, these are presented as general guidelines that can be adapted by the specific teachings of elders and wisdom keepers.

- **Respect:** When we respect ourselves and everyone that we encounter, then we keep a strong

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<sup>14</sup> Fire Thunder, Cecilia. “Returning to Being Good Relatives: Addressing Lateral Oppression and Violence.” *Futures Without Violence*. Retrieved from <https://s3.amazonaws.com/fwvcorp/wp-content/uploads/20160121115408/Lateral-Oppression-and-Violence-Presentation-Slides-PDF.pdf>

connection with our ancestors and allow ourselves to embrace positive change in a time of active decolonization through Indigenization.

- **Healthy communication:** In order to keep a high level of meta-awareness about the prevalence of coloniality and the need to heal and build unity & strength, healthy communication is vital. When someone brings one of the aspects we are working to expel (cultural guilt & shame, external value systems, racist hierarchies & structures, and lateral oppression & violence), we need to be able to address the situation in ways that do not sacrifice love and kindness in order to achieve an ultimate goal of language revitalization.
- **Kindness:** When compassion and respect are so deeply intertwined, then we can continually monitor the lines between humor and insult, not knowing and ignoring, and other types of situations where we adhere to or create systems that cause pain or prevent healing in an environment of Indigeneity.
- **Unfragmented existence:** While everyone will have their own intentions, desires, value structures, and individuality, focus must be given to the deliberate act of building a language movement that does not abandon people or operate in factions. If you find yourself deciding whether you support person A or person B, then it is time to figure out what the dividing factors might be and eliminate those barriers.

### 5.5 Visualizing Holistic Language Movements

A language movement is made up of interconnected components that have to do with two general categories. Language revitalization is the act of implementing the strategies and initiatives that result from language planning and policy. Language advocates and their organizations want to avoid being trapped in cycles of stress and constant pressure where no real change occurs. In order to minimize the chance of that happening, language planning and policy activities should occur regularly with the previously identified operating philosophies in mind, and then the strategies and initiatives identified in planning and policy activities should be carried out in ways that are conscious of the overall goals and deeply embedded coloniality. These concepts are represented in Figure 14, which represents the

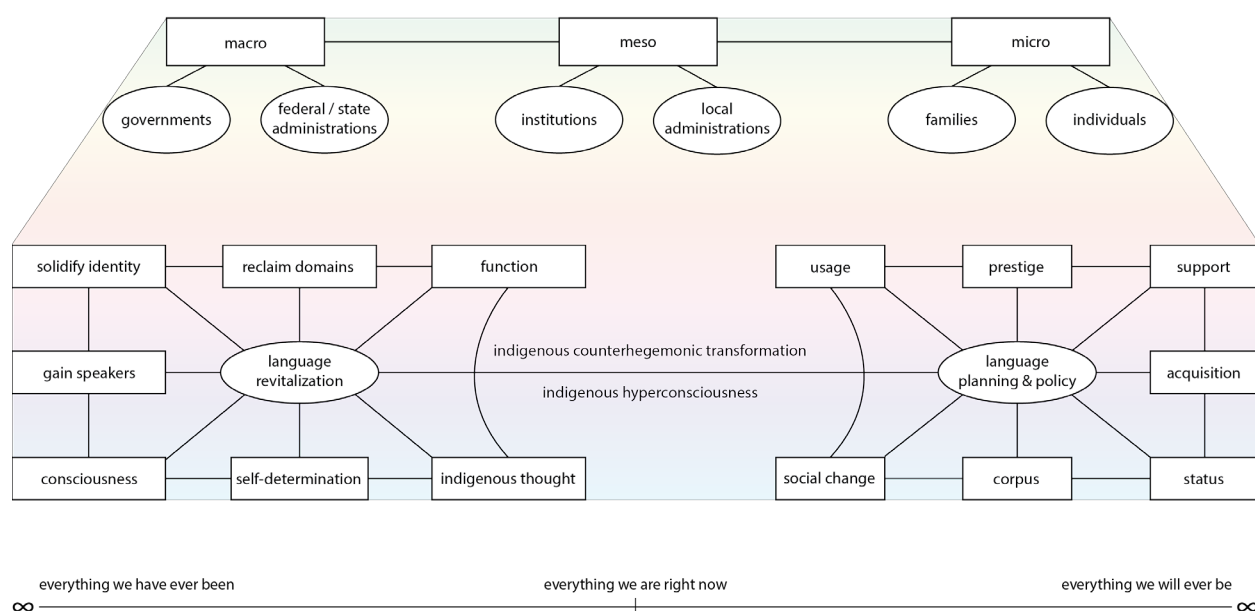


Figure 14: Unfragmented Indigenous Language Movement Building

interconnected activities of language planning & policy that result in language revitalization.

Language policy and planning should be focusing on the following areas:

- **Usage:** In what ways can the use of the language be maximized so that it becomes the vernacular? Many language revitalization initiatives find their language is used, but often to only say hello and how are you doing, or exclusively for ceremonial purposes. The goal here is to provide the tools and encourage Indigenous languages to be used as the medium of daily conversation, and not just a handshake language or one reserved for ceremonial purposes.
- **Prestige:** It is common for languages to have perceived social value that is often categorized as high and low, where the high language is considered more prestigious and the low language is one that is used by people who are perceived as being of a lower social class or standing. The recommended strategies here are twofold: 1) is to actively deconstruct notions that one language has a greater function or value than another, and 2) is to create places and situations where comprehension and speech production are expected from its population. While these two initiatives might seem contradictory, they are both necessary. Colonialism has resulted in countless situations where the colonial language is not only the default, but is often considered the only language of actual use and value. This is a symptom of colonial

racism, and needs to be addressed and deconstructed actively and publicly in order to create spaces for Indigenous language use and value. Committing to these activities is not resigning to the perception that Indigenous languages are of lesser value, but in fact is a commitment to hierarchies of racial & linguistic superiority and disabling the power structures that allow people to disregard Indigenous languages to the point that they could actually watch them die when something can be done to stop that. Another side of the prestige discussion involves creating value for Indigenous languages that are in addition to the currently sentimental and spiritual values that often exist. This can be done by creating expectations of knowing by enacting policies that require language proficiency or fluency in order to run for office or hold management positions. Another way is to push economic value onto the language by making it a job qualification, or a skill that is so highly valued that knowledge of the language is a factor in hiring at all levels. This could be amplified by initiatives such as graduation ceremonies for moving up in fluency, and establishing higher pay scales for those who can speak the language.

- **Support:** Language speakers, teachers, and learners are actively resisting some of the strongest forces of colonialism, and if the language is highly endangered then many of them feel isolated and unsafe with their work in language revitalization. Some of the dangers are from the colonial world, and others are internal of the group and also of the individual. Support for language revitalization can take many forms and should be coming from many different places, whether it is ceremonies to release the grief of historical traumas, methods of keeping one another motivated while continually striving to create social change at three different levels (micro, meso, macro) simultaneously, stabilizing funding sources, increasing administrative capacities, becoming better teachers, documenting a language, and dealing with the loss of older generations of speakers. At a Roundtable on Revitalization of Alaska Native Languages at the 2015 Alaska Native Studies Conference, Director of the Alaska Native Language Center Larry Kaplan said, “we don’t need more linguists. We need more therapists.” The areas that support planning should involve listening to those who are



working on language revitalization, and brainstorming ways to make their work and lives less burdensome.

- **Status:** David Crystal defines status planning as, “more concerned with the social and political implications of choosing a language, and with such matters as language attitudes, national identity, international use, and minority rights.”<sup>15</sup> While this is closely related to prestige, the primary difference is that prestige deals with the social perception of a language’s value, while status is concerned with the social and political situations that dictate which language is used for various purposes. Here are some examples at various levels:

- » micro: when you are around grandma you speak Tlingit to her as the primary language
- » meso: when you shop at the local store you speak English during the transaction
- » macro: you cannot defend yourself in your Indigenous language in court

These are presented merely as examples, and are not statements of the way things actually are. However, language advocates should keep an eye on concepts related to status and strategize methods to creating change.

- **Corpus:** This involves the rules and conventions that govern the way a language is used, taught, and spelled. Corpus planning could involve any of the following activities: maintaining proper language use in a variety of social spheres (ceremonial speeches, storytelling, etc.), determining the differences between dialects, standardizing spelling, creating new words, developing grammars to record and teach the language, and creating and publishing dictionaries.
- **Social Change:** In most colonial environments, an endangered language is a symptom of massive social shifts where the language has been forced out of use and its people have become at many levels alienated from their language. Social change should be consciously engineered and carefully considered in the micro, meso, and macro realms by determining what is most needed and also most likely to be achieved. One of the parallel goals of having healthy languages is also having healthy communities, and that should be implemented

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<sup>15</sup> Crystal, David. *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 8949-8951.



through conscious social change that assesses, plans, and engages with love, kindness, respect, healthy communication, and hyperconsciousness.

Regardless of whether the goal is maintaining stability for an Indigenous language or bringing it back to daily use by its speaking population, the task is massive and often understaffed and under-budgeted. As activities are determined and implemented, they should be carried out with the following phenomena as driving principles:

- **Indigenous thought:** Planning activities should be nested within the thought-world of the language that it is working to protect. Fluent birth speakers should collaborate with second language speakers to ensure that language programs are not mere translations of Eurocentric systems, but have a foundation of plurality that continues to look towards the thought world that is reflected in oratory, grammar, parables, and the messages delivered in the language that comes from intellectual leaders of ancient and modern times. The language community will need to be balanced so that birth speakers feel that the language is being carried along in a way that respects Ancestors, but still allows room for new learners to make the language their own and adapt it to new places and contexts.
- **Self-determination:** The directions of the language movement should be governed by the people who are connected to it through ancestral heritage. Non-Indigenous people play important roles in language revitalization efforts as learners, teachers, advocates, and administrators, but the power of making decisions for the language should be nested within the Indigenous governance systems. In addition, while funding is necessary, care should be taken to avoid compromising language goals in order to fit the requirements of a particular set of funds. The language belongs to the people, and there are often many organizations who could end up competing with each other, but should be collaborating and realizing that infighting can derail the efforts of individuals and organizations.
- **Consciousness:** Many of the items discussed in this chapter are tangled in a web of coloniality and modernity, which means that creating successful language movements often feel like untangling a net. In Tlingit, the verb root «√kei» translates to “follow trail” or “unravel; undo,”

<sup>16</sup> and a series of verbs can be formed from this root, including «akaawakei» (s/he tracked the footprints or trail of it), «akawsikei» (s/he untangled it), «awlikéi» (s/he unraveled it), «kawdikéi» (s/he fell apart and failed), and «tlél kawdakei» (s/he succeeded).<sup>17</sup> While telling a sacred story about a young man who became a salmon and then returned to become a healer, Kaalkáawu Cyril George, talks about a river he returns to which is called «Kaa Tú Kaxsakee Héeni», which he translated to “A River That Untangles Your Mind”.<sup>18</sup> These concepts and many others are important in order to keep from thinking too abstractly about colonialism and coloniality, or feeling defeated by its pervasiveness.

- **Gain speakers:** One of the primary goals should be protecting the existing speakers, meaning they are shown respect, are cherished and cared for, and that new speakers are going by them and interacting with them. Another goal is to make new speakers, and that should be done in ways that try to focus on language use and acquisition while shedding as much historical trauma and unhealthy behavior as possible
- **Social identity:** A language program should be working to create a place where language speakers and users have a high social status for what they are doing. Sometimes this results in beliefs that others are being excluded or forgotten, but the need to elevate the status of the language and increase the confidence and self-worth of speakers is paramount. One of the ways to do this is focus on making the place where the language lives the greatest place to be, and to work hard to get everyone to that place. Recognition of living birth speakers, and graduation celebrations for new speakers should be joyous events and those who do not speak the language and are not yet on the path to learning should be able to see how elevating the language is valuable work and does not diminish the status of those who have yet to dedicate themselves to learning and using the language.
- **Reclaim domains:** Domains are social, physical, cognitive, or linguistic spaces where a language is used. They are language ecosystems. There was a time when the Indigenous

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<sup>16</sup> Leer, Jeff. *Tlingit Stem List*. Unpublished manuscript. Alaska Native Language Archive TL962L1975m, 1978, 61.

<sup>17</sup> Leer, Jeff. *Tlingit Verbs*. Unpublished manuscript. Alaska Native Language Archive TL962L1974h, 1974, 404–405.

<sup>18</sup> George, Cyril. “Kaalkáawu X’édáx Sh kalneek — Déix — Aak’wtaatseen (Tlingit Language),” trans. Ishmael Hope and Lance Twitchell. *YouTube*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r93zoR8QXM8>.

language was the primary language in all spheres, and the goal should be to reclaim as many domains as possible. Contrary to the belief perpetrated by colonists historically and colonial figures today, domains do not have to eliminate languages in order to create space for themselves. This belief is so deep-seated in colonial populations that it results in an unsubstantiated and absurd fear that strength of Indigenous languages will come only at the expense of a weakening of English and therefore some type of global suffering experienced at the local level. These are irrational paranoid symptoms of a nation built upon racist ideologies in which colonizing languages and cultures fear their own death while continuing to commit linguistic and cultural genocide upon Indigenous populations.

- **Function:** The Indigenous language is often stereotyped as archaic and primitive, which is a problematic and false categorization rooted in the ways that racist hierarchies dominate American cultures. Widespread suppression of languages contribute to the myth of the primitive and advanced, but interactions with knowledge systems and sciences around the world will enrich the ways that world knowledge is seen within local areas by including the perspectives of Indigenous peoples. The danger is multifaceted, where on one hand the language may never rise into full use because English is used to talk about social tendencies, technologies, sports, and more, while the Indigenous language only talks about Indigenous cultural activities or translates the English world only to make jokes; on the other hand, the language may experience too radical a shift and become merely an eternal translation of the thought worlds that originate from a colonizing existence.

## 5.6 Metacognition in Language Revitalization Movements

Language planning and policy activities in endangered languages should be unified through a primary goal: bring the language home and keep it there. For languages that are less endangered, the goals might be to keep the language in the home while protecting other domains. While the meso and macro are indeed important social realms, languages live and die on whether or not they are a primary means of communication in the home. Language planners and advocates should be seeing

the home as a nest for the language, and as Hawaiian Scholar Larry Kimura told members of Tlingit & Haida at a planning meeting: let the children be the yeast. The main ideas here are twofold: 1) the language belongs in the home, and 2) children are a wonderful source of inspiration and unity. Even if people disagree on the methodology or how the language should be used or who should and should not be teaching or using it, seeing a classroom full of children use the language as a primary means of communication is a life-changing experience.

A metacognitive approach to language revitalization would examine a full range of aspects of it including among other things ideology, actors, and perspectives, enabling groups of people to overcome colonial forces and revitalize their language. Indigenous metacognition, as shown in Figure 15, is an awareness of all social macro, meso, and micro policies governing people, places, and expected social activities, including how these policies influence individual and collective thought processes, particularly within oppressive systems. Individuals and groups decide which policies they internalize and which ones they externalize in their own realms of morality and desire, allowing them to determine which policies will be followed and which will be violated, either overtly or covertly. This must occur in continuous time while deconstructing cultural hegemonic value systems and methodologies in order to engineer the recovery of Indigenous spaces of thought and existence

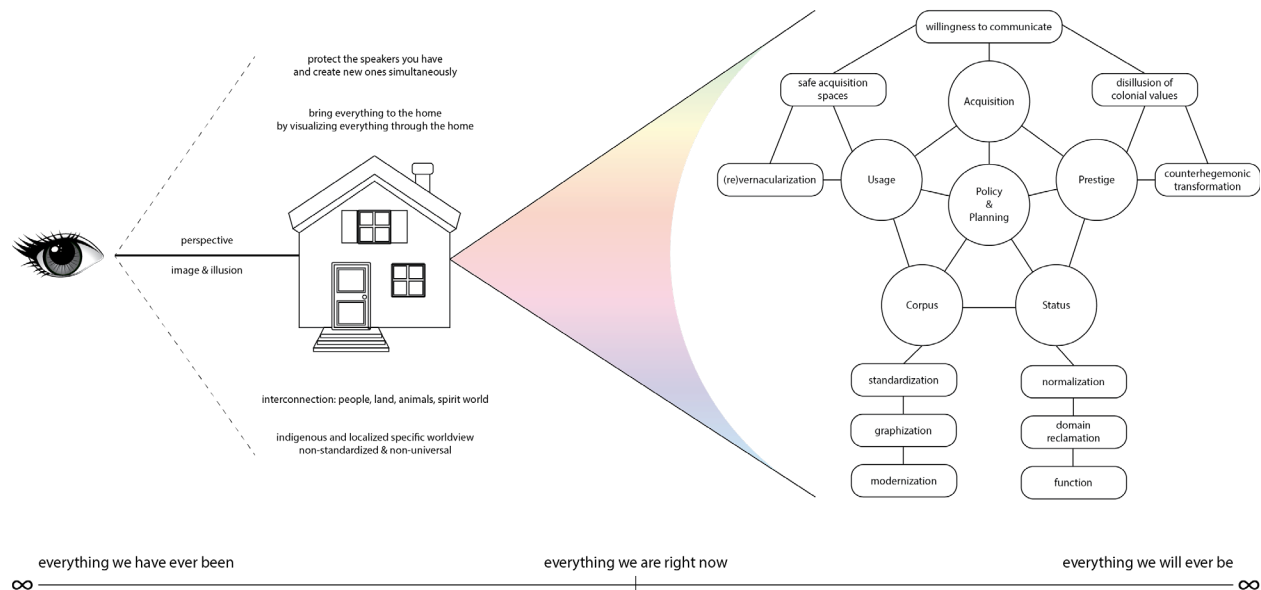


Figure 15: Domains and Functions Through Indigenous Metacognition

If an Indigenous language is endangered and dying, then decolonization is a necessary step to bringing the language back to a safe place. This means developing awarenesses for systematic racism and lateral oppression. Backing up this awareness is the ability to dispel the myths of racial and linguistic hierarchies and develop & implement strategies that result in linguistic equity. At the most basic level, equity is the absence of disparity, so linguistic equity means no language is suffering in a place where it belongs.

In order to transform homes into language revitalization zones, or to maintain that, care should be taken to see the interconnected pieces of domains and functions. Language policy & planning is the active process of determining what needs to be done in order to ensure language continuity and health. This involves a cycle of assessment, planning, development, and implementation. These activities are done in the areas of Usage, Acquisition, Prestige, Status, and Corpus. Starting at the lower part of Figure 15, work in Corpus and Status planning set the stage for the language to be used, and deal primarily with the working parts of the language itself. The upper parts of the chart have more to do with the interactions between people and languages in social spheres, and deal primarily with methods to help people select the Indigenous language for use.

*Corpus* consists of three parts: **Standardization**, which focuses on how languages function in various dialects in terms of meaning, use, differences, and what will emerge as the common way to teach the language. **Graphization** has to do with the development and use of a writing system to document the language and transmit through written media. **Modernization** focuses on how the language might need to adjust in order maintain itself as the language of daily use by incorporating new technologies, social phenomena, and local, regional, national, and global happenings.

*Status* also consists of three parts: **Normalization** is concerned with how likely a person might be to hear or see the language in a given space, and activities in this realm might involve promoting use of the language through signage, encouraging public use of the language, and restoring traditional placenames. **Domain reclamation** is the act of bringing the language into particular social or physical spaces by reintroducing older vocabulary and developing new vocabulary and bringing those terms into various realms. **Function** concerns the ways in which the language is used and maximizing

functions so the language can be the medium of all communication without needing to bring a colonial language into a dominant position during Indigenous language uses.

Corpus and status planning form a pillar for the language to stand upon, and care should be taken to ensure that the language is living in a way that provides comfort and ownership for the Indigenous community, and that the language is being cared for in way that allows for Indigenous authority and sovereignty. In a publication on language standardization within the Basque language in northern Spain and southwestern France, author Garabide Elkartea points out that: “Every country in the world realised long ago that in order for a language to remain strong and healthy, we must look after its trunk, and that it is very difficult for a language to survive unless it is used in education, cultural transmission, mass media and the public administration.”<sup>19</sup>

At the top of this foundation we see the dynamics that affect language choice. At the core of any language revitalization effort is this question: how can we give speakers the confidence they need and keep awake within them the desire to speak the Indigenous language? There are studies that look at the willingness to communicate, which should be analyzed if further knowledge is desired on the factors that contribute to language choice. Here, however, we focus upon three major elements that are connected by a string of interconnected personal, social, and institutional factors.

*Usage* refers to the creation and maintenance of social and physical spaces where the language will be used, and support networks for speakers and learners to commit to using the Indigenous language to communicate about any given thing at any given time. Language communities should be tracking what topics and situations cause them to switch to English, and then strategize methods of converting those to Indigenous domains. One of the main vehicles for this is **(re)vernacularization**, which seeks to ensure that the Indigenous language is the one selected for day to day conversation about common topics, meaning it is the language of choice among the target population. Related to this is the concept of **Safe Acquisition Spaces**, meaning that humor and tradition are certainly a part of the language ecosystem, but participants will generally feel safe from lateral violence, cultural bullying, public humiliation and shaming, and marginalization. Creating and maintaining these

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19 Elkartea, Garabide. *Language standardisation: Basque recovery II*. Gertu: Creative Commons, 2010, 14.

spaces is a tremendous challenge, because fragmentation is commonly seen in language learning environments, and those can be caused by disagreements on standardization, personality conflicts, jealousies and insecurities, family squabbles, clan histories of conflict, and more. The language use environment must be a place that people want to be, and are genuinely rewarded for their efforts and developments within the language.

*Acquisition* is an area with a great deal of surrounding scholarship within the fields of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) or Second Language Learning (SLL). Haida scholar Frederick White calls for a new category called Ancestral Language Acquisition (ALA) or Ancestral Language Learning (ALL). White states:

I propose that a new thinking is necessary concerning the categorization of the First Nations/ Native Americans in the SLA/L camp. Though some characteristics are relevant, most of the characteristics do not validate the uniqueness of Native American culture within mainstream American or Canadian culture. Nor does SLA/L theory address Native Americans having to relearn their ancestral language. Such is the case for many Native Americans who are finding themselves trying to renew the daily usage of the ancestral language of their mother's or grandmother's generation.<sup>20</sup>

One of the areas that requires particular attention is the Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which was addressed in chapter 3. There have been perhaps hundreds of students who have been through years of Tlingit language study, but still engage in English throughout the vast majority of their lives. Many of these students are severely limited in their ability to communicate a few years after the classes have ended. Part of this is the lack of opportunities to speak and could be tied to excessive criticism shown to new learners by some members of the speaking community, but it is firmly tied to the willingness to communicate. Lack of use results in stagnation, and language students who go through long stretches without using the language refer to themselves as “rusty” when someone engages with them in Tlingit.

*Presitge* is the perceived social value of the language, often in comparison to colonial languages.

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<sup>20</sup> White, Frederick. “Rethinking Native American Language Revitalization.” *American Indian Quarterly* 30.1–2 (2006), 91–109.



In this realm, language advocates are reminded that the current prestige of an Indigenous language is inextricably entangled with racism at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Within families and small social circles many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people harbor deep-seated beliefs that Indigenous languages are of less value and usefulness. Sometimes they will communicate this in verbal and non-verbal ways, which can discourage friends and family members from using the language. Within communities and regions among the Tlingit, there is reluctance to fully incorporate social shifts that would result in fighting the issue of prestige. Many language speakers, teachers, and learners are relatively isolated in their work and with the content that they are working with. Indigenous leaders often talk publicly about the importance of the language, but rarely find their way into language learning and use environments. At the macro level, politicians repeatedly ignore the dire state of Indigenous languages, publicly refer to them as symbolic languages, or imply that they are of great value to only certain parts of the Indigenous population.

This brings us back to the **dissolution of colonial values**, which encourages efforts by individuals and institutions to identify ways in which the actions and functions of individuals and organizations perpetuate the myth of linguistic and racial superiority. One of the methods of achieving this heightened level of conscious effort to create and protect linguistic equity is through **counterhegemonic transformation**, which seeks to continually analyze all of the interconnected pieces of languages, peoples, cultures, ethnicities, places, histories, and ideologies in ways that deconstruct colonial mechanisms and reconstruct individuals and societies into ecosystems that function with plurality as a driving factor. This means being highly conscious of the genocide, ethnocide, linguicide, and racist hierarchies and actively rejecting them through policy changes, institutional infiltration, raising of Indigenous voices and thought worlds, and commanding the vocabulary of institutions in order to maintain clarity when talking about equity and health.

### **5.7 Cherishing Our Ancestors, Ourselves, Our Grandchildren**

As Tlingit continues to build upon an incredible history of documentation, use, teaching, learning, and advocacy, it should embrace the philosophies that have been handed down by speakers of the



language who invested their lives in working on ways to ensure language continuity. One of them is presented here as a spiritual force for the Tlingit language movement. At a gathering of elders in 1981 that was hosted by the Sealaska Corporation, Kaagwaantaan cultural leader Kaal.átk' Charlie Joseph said the following words as part of a larger speech:<sup>21</sup>

Ch'u tlákwdáx	Even from long ago
haa dachxán	we have placed our grandchildren
haa kináa kei wtusinúk.	high above ourselves.
Aaa.	Yes.
X'atulitseen.	We cherish them.
Tsu kushtuyáx daa sá yaa tushigéiyi át	Even those things we treasure
du jeedéi yatx gatooteeyín	we used to offer up to them,
haa dachxanx siteeyí káa.	to those who are our grandchildren.
Ách áyá yáa yeedát	That is why now
s du wakshiyeex tulayéxx.	we made these songs their vision.

The challenge for every Tlingit language speaker, learner, participant, program administrator, advocate, and ally is to fully embrace these words on a daily basis while committing to using the language and fostering environments where it has power and use. All of these wonderful gifts that were passed along to us—it is our responsibility to hand them along, to defend them from harm or insult, and to give everything we have to understand and speak.

In addition to this, consider the following statement from Kaajakwtí Walter Soboleff, L'eeneidí, which were shared with Woosh Jixoo Éesh George Ramos, L'uknax.ádi, while they were speaking about the importance of the Tlingit language. This is part of a conversation recording project that was undertaken and masterfully executed by L Jaakk Alice Taff.<sup>22</sup>

Aadé wooch yaa ayadunéiyi yé áyú ch'áakw.	This is how they used to honor each other long ago.
Aadé wooch yaa ayadunéiyi yé.	This is how they honored each other.
Yeedát ku.aa wé	Right now
yáa yées kustí yéi duwasáagu át	what they call this new generation
uh, a yáa ch'a uwayáa a kaadé yaa kusanax'ákw.	it seems as though they are forgetting.
Anák yaa koowkandayéin.	They are leaving it behind.
Yáa ch'áagu yak'éiyi	This ancient,

21 Joseph, Charlie, in *Haa Tuwunáagu Yís: For Our Healing Spirit*. Trans. Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990, 266–267.

22 Soboleff, Walter. "54: T'aawchán, Xaajaakwtí, Shgóonde Walter Soboleff and Wochjix'oo Éesh George Ramos." *Woosh Een áyá Yoo X'atudli.átk: Tlingit Conversation Documentation Project, 2007-2013*. Trans X'aagi Shaawú Keri Eggleston, Shaksháani Margaret Dutson, Alice Taff, and X'unei Lance Twitchell.

Lingít aa kústeeyí.	good Tlingit way of life.
Tlaḡ wáa sá k'éiyin.	It used to be very good.
Áwé a náḡ yaa haa kundayéin	They are leaving it behind,
—ách áwé yéi kuwunaḡéich,	that's why they say,
«Tlél x'wán a kát yee sawux'aagúk!»	"Don't forget our way of life!"
Yáa yak'éiyi át	This wonderful thing
yáa Lingít'aaní káa koowdziteeyi át	that was born on the world,
ka a káax' has wooneixí át.	and on this world this is the thing that saved them.
Tél x'wán	Don't ever
yee jeedáḡ wooweexíḡ!	let it fall from you!
Gaylasháat!	Hold onto it!
Á áyá	This,
a káax' has koowdzitee,	it was born for us,
yáa haa shagóonx'i.	our ancestors.
Yéi áyá, yéi áyá aadé kḡwatée.	I am going to bring it.
Aadé kḡwatée yáa gaaw.	I am going to bring it at this time.
Yá yées ku.ooch ga.aaxt!	Let the young people hear it!
Yées ku.ooch ga.aaxt!	Let young people hear it!
Hél aadé ch'u tlei dleit káa haa oonaxsateeyi yé.	There's no way we can just be white people.
Lingít áyá uháan.	We are Tlingit.
Yak'éi yá tsú a too yéi wootee á ku.aa.	What is inside of it is a wonderful thing.
Á kwa x'wán yaa gaxtootée.	Let us keep carrying it along.
Tlél kalidéix'i át áyá.	It's nothing shameful.
Ligéiyi át áyá yaa gaxtootée.	It's a big thing we're going to carry.
Yáa haa shagóonx'i a káax' has woo.aat.	Our ancestors followed that.
A káax' has koowdzitee.	They lived according to it.
A káax' has wooneix.	That's what saved them.
Ách áyá yáadu uháan	That is why we're here
yáa yagiye.	today.

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All of this contributes to the motivation and direction of the language movement. It is larger than any one person, or any one clan, or any one village. It is in fact everything we have ever been, are right now, or could ever be as Tlingit people. It adopts principles from our relatives on the island of Hawai'i: 1) protect new speakers while making new ones, 2) make Tlingit the language of power and use, and 3) let the children be the yeast. It incorporates post-colonial theory in order to deconstruct the houses that tried to kill it and now executes power through silencing, ignoring, othering, and excluding. On our ancestral land we are rising up, elevated by the loving embrace of our ancestors, holding on to one another's hand in a unity that is larger than traumas, and with a determination to make a place for our little grandchildren.

# 6

## A 30 Year Language Plan for Tlingit

Ax̱ X̱'agáax'i Yéi Ḵgwatée: Ch'u Tleix̱ Ḵugaagastee Lingít

*My Prayer Will Be This: Let Tlingit Live Forever*

Daa sá lingíṯ sitee.  
Du tuwáa sigóowu  
Lingíṯ áwé awushgóogu,  
tle áwé has du eedé gax̱toodashée.  
Yéi áwé ax̱ toowúch yatee.  
Ax̱ toowú yak'ei  
yeewháan a daa yánde gax̱yinaagi.  
Haa jináḵ daak kanals'is a yáx̱ áwé yatee,  
áwé yá Lingíṯ yoo x̱'atángi.  
Ldakáṯ áṯ ku.aa áwé a daat wutusikóo  
a x̱oo áa uháan.  
Ách áwé yeewháanch,  
a daa yánde gax̱yinaagi.  
Aaa, hás tsú,  
has du x̱oodé yoo gáxyi.átk.  
Has du een ḵwa kanayneek!  
Yá Lingíṯ yoo x̱'atánḵ áyá .áx̱ji aa,  
ka yoo x̱'atánḵ awsikóowu aa,  
has du x̱ánx̱ yigoodí gé  
tlél wáa sá utí yoo has x̱'anaywóos'.  
Has du een kanayneek, wáa sá ḵuyeeynóogu.  
Ch'u "sometimes" áwé,  
tlél ḵaa jeet ookéet'ch.  
Áwé,

That which is Tlingit.  
If s/he wants  
to master the Tlingit language,  
then they are the ones we will help.  
That is how I feel.  
I feel good  
you all, that you are all going to stand up for it.  
It is like it is blowing out of our hands,  
the Tlingit language.  
we know a lot of things about it,  
those of us who are among it.  
Because of this, it will be you all,  
you are going to stand for it.  
Yes, them as well,  
you are going to go walk among them.  
You tell them!  
Those who understand the Tlingit language,  
and those who know Tlingit,  
ask them if it is okay for you to go by them,  
if you can visit them.  
You all tell them what you are doing.  
Just sometimes, that is,  
it becomes awkward in the hands.  
Yes,

aagáa áwé wudashí  
 “sometimes” ch’a kaa jeex’.  
 K’idéin yoo dudzinéi Lingít yoo x’atángi teen.  
 Ách áwé i een kaḡaneek, yee een kaḡaneek:  
 has du xánx nay.aat!  
 Gaḡyisikóo goodáx aa sá,  
 Lingít  
 yoo x’atánk awsikóo.  
 Has du jeedé yoo x’ayudatángi shákdé,  
 áwé “cooperation” tóonáx gaḡyisikóo:  
 tle ch’as yeewháan áyá a daa yánde gaḡyináak.  
 Tléel ch’a goot kaa.  
 Yeewháanch áyá a kagéi yís,  
 yee ee wdudlitóow.  
 Ách áyá a kát tuxwatán.  
 kúnáx yee kát tuxwatán,  
 k’idéin gugwatéeyi.  
 Yéi áyá.  
 Yéi áyá koogéi ax yoo x’atángi.  
 – Keiwnéi

and that is when help  
 sometimes just comes into a persons hands.  
 You improve it by using the Tlingit language.  
 This is why i am telling you, i am telling you all:  
 go by them!  
 And then you will know where it comes from,  
 Tlingit,  
 knowing the Tlingit language.  
 Maybe when s/he talks to them,  
 and through cooperation you will all know:  
 it will just be you all who will stand up for it.  
 Not another person.  
 You all, for it,  
 you were taught.  
 This is why I hope for it.  
 I am really hoping for you all,  
 that it will be good.  
 This is all.  
 This is the length of my speech.  
 – Nora Marks Dauenhauer, Lukaax.ádi<sup>1</sup>

## 6.1 Where We Are At, and Where We Are Going

Tlingit is a well-documented language with decades of revitalization efforts that have resulted in a wealth of language documentation in print, audio, and video; a series of classes at the University of Alaska Southeast; and a number of organizations that deliver language learning activities across Tlingit territory. These organizations work to provide language and culture programs in public education, run mentor-apprentice programs, develop curriculum, document language, and also work together on language immersion and language intensive learning camps. Despite these activities, the rate of producing speakers is too slow and low, and intergenerational transmission of the language is not happening at the rate needed. The language exists in isolated pockets and is rarely seen or heard in communities. It is still dying despite decades of efforts to keep it alive, but this plan seeks to change that outcome with a thirty year plan to develop a P–20 education system that uses Tlingit as the medium for all education, maximizing opportunities to develop fluency and complexity. In order to most effectively develop the P–20 system and to normalize the language, a Tlingit Adult Immersion

<sup>1</sup> Dauenhauer, Nora Marks. Audio recording by Kathy Ruddy, 2014.

Program and Tlingit Language Media Network will be developed in addition to activities designed to unite existing organizations in the Tlingit Language Continuity Movement.

## 6.2 The Urgency of Stopping Tlingit Decline

A rapid decline in speakers has accelerated over the past hundred years and currently reveals a path to extinction. In the early 1900s, even though land ownership and self-governance were threatened by colonial invasion, the Tlingit people still had their language. Fluency rates were high, children learned from birth, it was the language of choice in the home, and wide usage resulted in high levels of language comprehension and use. American colonial genocide destroyed that, beginning with the bombardment of three Tlingit communities (Kake in 1869, Wrangell in 1869, and Angoon in 1882),<sup>2</sup> then transitioning to Jim Crow civilization laws in the early 1900s, and peaking with the boarding school era in the mid 1900's.

Unfortunately, assimilation and language death is a workable outcome for nearly all Alaskan people, Native and non-native. For the Alaska Native, there is far too much complacency to be instigators of real change. In most Alaska Native communities, there are only a handful of activists who are left to solve the dilemma with little real input or support from elected leaders in state, federal, and Tribal organizations. For the non-native, the problem is invisible; language death and cultural genocide do not exist in the public consciousness, except for the occasional news story about language revitalization efforts. Utterly absent in Alaskan media and education are analyses of why genocidal acts took place throughout history, what they signify, and what they result in today. If Alaska Native languages are going to revitalize, then education must undergo a complete transformation. It must be a system governed by Alaska Native people who are aware of the killing machine that education has been and is today, so they can shape it into the mold of successful Indigenous models like those run by Hawaiian, Māori, Sami, Gaelic, and Greenlandic advocates.

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<sup>2</sup> Worl, Rosita. "Alaska." *The Oxford Handbook of American Indian History*. Ed. Frederick E. Hoxie. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, 307.

### 6.3 Building a Language Continuity Movement

Language shift in Indigenous communities is a population shifting away from an Indigenous language to a colonial one, resulting in the death of the Indigenous language. While the loss of Indigenous languages are tied to historical traumas and genocidal practices by powerful nations, the future of languages always lie within the hands of those who are ethnically tied to the language. There can be external assistance, and it takes entire communities to revitalize languages to regular use and good health. Instigators of change must focus on the individual and their decision whether or not to speak the language, and then also on the collective and whether or not they choose to stand up for their language. Terms like “language abandonment”<sup>3</sup> and “language suicide”<sup>4</sup> have emerged in recent scholarship to talk about accountability, but a more positive approach should be taken, using terms like *language sovereignty* or *language authority*. Some of these realms concern attitudes about language, and language planners and advocates should think of it in this manner: 1) create change so Indigenous people understand that they have the responsibility and capability of revitalizing a language by learning it and using it, and 2) create opportunities for the language to be learned in a positive, productive, and loving environment.

Language revitalization is an everlasting cycle of planning and implementation activities: assess, develop, implement, revise. This should be done with the thought world of the language at the center, tailored for the types of language users, and filtered through the values of the language. A visualization for Tlingit is represented by Figure 16. In linguistics, revitalization efforts are often categorized into two types of planning, *status planning* and *corpus planning*, as explained by the following excerpt from Bamgbose:

Status planning is concerned with the role given to a language. It may involve the maintenance, extension, or restriction of the range of uses of a language for particular functions, language standardization, revival of a dead language, or the introduction of an artificial language. Corpus planning, on the other hand, is concerned with the language material and may involve vocabulary expansion, changes in language structure, simplification

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<sup>3</sup> Tsunoda, Tasaku. *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization*, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Perley, Bernard C. *Defying Maliseet Language Death*, 121.

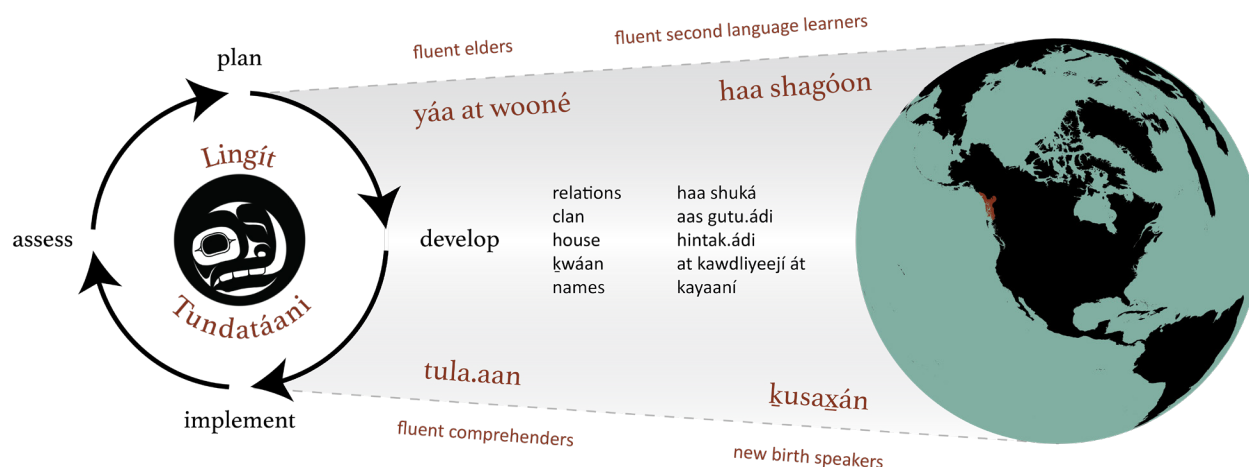


Figure 16: Tlingit Curricula Model

of registers, orthographic innovation (including design, harmonization, change of script, and spelling reform), pronunciation, style, and preparation of language material.<sup>5</sup>

To put it another way, language planning is thinking about how and where the language will be used and corpus planning is figuring out how the language will function in those places.

For example, bringing the language back into the home is language planning and could involve strategies on how to encourage this to happen, such as: creating neighborhoods where language-using families reside, social contracts that families undertake, activities designed specifically for those families, newspaper articles that promote and encourage language use, and financial rewards or other social benefits for families who bring the language back to their home. The accompanying corpus planning would involve creating vocabulary for items that may not have words, like remote control, toilet plunger, can opener, and so on. It would also involve working with fluent speakers to recover phrases that may not be in use any longer or develop new ones, like “change the baby’s diaper!” or “keep that dog away from my sandwich!”

These planning efforts should be part of a larger comprehensive plan that is revisited regularly and has overarching goals. Seeing the goals in these ways, compartmentalizing them into what is being accomplished and why, and also the steps involved, helps crystallize the vision of a language revitalization movement. With all the organizations, individuals, and communities involved in language revitalization efforts, the term *Tlingit Language Movement* should be used to show how all

5 Bamgbose, Ayo. “Issues for a Model of Language Planning,” 30.



the pieces are part of one unifying vision. No one individual is bigger than the big picture. Involved organizations should see themselves as a canoe within a fleet, and those within the organization should be unifying their paddle strokes to help move towards the same goal.

#### **6.4 Indigenous Disruption Scales**

Domain loss and recovery has been a popular topic of scholarship in sociolinguistics, which seeks to provide scales that are universal to languages, situations, and histories. An examination of three such models reveals a general plan for language revitalization which is to first obtain a stable diglossia and then to transcend that diglossia. While the logic of doing so is fundamentally sound as far as sociolinguistics are concerned, a metaphorical equivalent for colonized Indigenous people might be to suggest that first they get the land back, and then build purely Indigenous networks and communities. This may be possible in some areas, but for thousands of Indigenous groups around the world it is an impossible dream. The journey to and beyond diglossia has been met with criticism by those who work with small Indigenous communities, such as Suzanne Romaine, who says:

My arguments, however, against its utility in a viable model of language maintenance and shift are of a different nature. Diglossia and societal bilingualism are not surface variants of the same underlying phenomenon, but are fundamentally different in their social origins, evolutionary course of development, and resolutions over the long term. Thus, the inclusion of these two sociolinguistic arrangements under the single rubric of ‘diglossia’ obscures rather than clarifies sociolinguistic theory (see Hudson, 2002).<sup>6</sup>

The Indigenous language advocate is not trying to discredit or disregard these theories and paths. Instead, the goal is to understand the logic in its entirety and then transform it through an Indigenous and post-colonial lens that creates adjustments that allow for effective measurements and planning for specific languages in specific situations, places, and populations.

Joshua Fishman published the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) in 1991 as a ‘Richter Scale’ that helps measure the damage done to a particular language.<sup>7</sup> He also advocates a

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6 Romaine, Suzanne. “Planning for the Survival of Linguistic Diversity.” *Language Policy* 5 (2006), 452.

7 Fishman, Joshua. *Reversing Language Shift*, 87–111.



sequential social movement that he terms “reversing language shift” (RLS) which is engineered by social agents called pro-RLSers (pro reversing language shifters).<sup>8</sup> It seems logical to declare that groups of people can lose their language through a series of steps and therefore should reverse those steps to return to language health, but the path there and back is much more complicated and non-linear. This is demonstrated by Romaine’s doubts on whether Fishman’s approach can apply to colonized Indigenous communities, noting that:

The term ‘RLS’ is misleading as it seems to suggest that we are undoing or reversing the past when it is obvious that we cannot go back in time. The idea of a linear irreversible history is rooted in modern western conceptions of time (Fabian, 1983). It is this western notion of time’s arrow pointing forward to which De Fréine (1965: 263–264) refers when he writes that, “history does not go round in circles... history progresses.” I have put the last two states of RLS in parentheses to indicate that RLS does not necessarily mean going back to a stage where X reclaims the majority of domains (i.e. yX). Nor is it the case that all X-men (to use Fishman’s terminology) will come to speak Xish as their native language, as they did in the past. It most certainly does not entail returning to monolingualism in X.<sup>9</sup>

The GIDS—shown below—is an excellent tool to determine the stage of language shift a population may be experiencing. Language shift is “a term used in sociolinguistics to refer to the gradual or sudden move from the use of one language to another, either by an individual or by a group.”<sup>10</sup>

FISHMAN GRADED INTERGENERATIONAL DISRUPTION SCALE (GIDS) OF 1991	
STAGE	DESCRIPTION
1	Some use of X-ish in higher level educational, occupational, governmental and media efforts
2	X-ish in lower governmental services and mass media but not in the higher spheres of either
3	use of X-ish in the lower work sphere (outside of the X-ish neighborhood/ community) involving interaction between X-men and Y-men

8 Fishman, Joshua. *Reversing Language Shift*, 10

9 Romaine, Suzanne. “Planning for the Survival of Linguistic Diversity,” 444.

10 Crystal, David. *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 6th ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), Kindle location 8950.

FISHMAN GRADED INTERGENERATIONAL DISRUPTION SCALE (GIDS) OF 1991	
STAGE	DESCRIPTION
4	X-ish in lower education (types a and b) that meets the requirements of compulsory education laws
5	X-ish literacy in home, school and community, but without taking on extra- communal reinforcement of such literacy
6	the attainment of intergenerational informal oracy and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement
7	most users of X-ish are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but they are beyond child-bearing age
8	most vestigial users of X-ish are socially isolated old folks and X-ish needs to be re-assembled from their mouths and memories

Table 10: Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)

Fishman's groundbreaking concept was expanded upon by M. Paul Lewis and Gary F. Simons, who presented the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) for which they claim:

Any known language, including those languages for which there are no longer speakers, can be categorized by using the resulting scale (unlike the GIDS). A language can be evaluated in terms of the EGIDS by answering five key questions regarding the identity function, vehicularity, state of intergenerational language transmission, literacy acquisition status, and a societal profile of generational language use. With only minor modification the EGIDS can also be applied to languages which are being revitalized.<sup>11</sup>

The EGIDS table below provides greater detail than the GIDS and has the same intended use: language planners go through a series of questions to determine what stage their language is in and then reverse direction to progress towards a healthier state.

M. PAUL LEWIS AND GARY F. SIMONS EXPANDED GRADED INTERGENERATIONAL DISRUPTION SCALE (EGIDS)		
STAGE	NAME	DESCRIPTION
0	INTERNATIONAL	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	NATIONAL	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, P.M., and Simons, G.F. "Assessing Endangerment: Expanding Fishman's Gids." *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*. (Dallas: SIL International, 2009), 2.

M. PAUL LEWIS AND GARY F. SIMONS EXPANDED GRADED INTERGENERATIONAL DISRUPTION SCALE (EGIDS)		
STAGE	NAME	DESCRIPTION
2	PROVINCIAL	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	WIDER COMMUNICATION	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	EDUCATIONAL	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	DEVELOPING	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6a	VIGOROUS	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	THREATENED	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	SHIFTING	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	MORIBUND	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8b	NEARLY EXTINCT	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	DORMANT	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	EXTINCT	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Table 11: Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS)

Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer applied Fishman's original GIDS specifically to the Tlingit language and developed the following "Steps In Reversing Language Shift: Severity of Intergenerational Dislocation."<sup>12</sup> They rearrange the scale by inverting it in hopes of clarifying that language planners should be moving down towards language health, which we might call stable multilingualism. They separate the scale into two distinct sections: the first seeks to attain diglossia and the second to transcend it. This is based upon both their studies in sociolinguistics and their innovative work in

<sup>12</sup> Dauenhauer, Nora Marks and Richard Dauenhauer. "Technical, Emotional, and Ideological Issues in Reversing Language Shift: Examples from Southeast Alaska," in *Endangered Languages: Language Loss and Community Response*. Ed. Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley (New York: Cambridge, 1998), 61.

documenting Tlingit, teaching it, and developing curriculum.

NORA & RICHARD DAUENHAUER STEPS IN REVERSING LANGUAGE SHIFT: SEVERITY OF INTERGENERATIONAL DISLOCATION	
I	RLS TO ATTAIN DIGLOSSIA (ASSUMING PRIOR IDEOLOGICAL CLARIFICATION)
1	Reconstructing Tlingit and adult acquisition of Tlingit as a second language.
2	Cultural interaction in Tlingit primarily involving the community-based older generation.
3	The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighborhood: the basis of mother-tongue transmission.
4	Schools for literacy acquisition, for the old and for the young, and not in lieu of compulsory education.
II	RLS TO TRANSCEND DIGLOSSIA, SUBSEQUENT TO ITS ATTAINMENT
5	Schools in lieu of compulsory education and substantially under Tlingit curricular and staffing control.
5 <sup>B</sup>	Public schools for Tlingit children, offering some instruction via Tlingit, but substantially under Anglo-American curricular and staffing control.
6	The local/regional (i.e. non-neighborhood) work sphere, both among Tlingit and among Anglo-Americans.
7	Local/regional mass media and governmental services.
8	Education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels.

Table 12: Steps In Reversing Language Shift: Severity of Intergenerational Dislocation

This is presented as a top-to-bottom approach with two linear goals: 1) attain diglossia, and 2) transcend diglossia. Attaining diglossia means that Tlingit would be used in addition to English, but would be in an obviously minority position in society. Transcending diglossia would mean that Tlingit finds its way to equality, and in terms of social power and use is on the same plane as English. These steps will be considered when developing a long-range plan for Tlingit: not as a series of steps leading to the next level of language revitalization, but more as strategies that require more social change and work the higher one wishes to ascend. They can be undertaken simultaneously instead of sequentially, although items 6–8 would be hard to attain without increasing the number of speakers by at least several hundred, and also significantly expanding the spheres of Tlingit language domains.

## 6.5 Resolving Disjuncture

Each of these scales has their place in diagnosing a stage of language decay, but are hardly a

road map to language stability. For example, recent estimates in Southeast Alaska reveal that the three Indigenous languages of the region—Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian—all lack intergenerational transmission, fluent children, and stable numbers of speakers. Tlingit is currently spoken by an estimated 0.6% of its population. If diglossia is a stated goal, This means that the stated goal according to the GIDS and EGIDS scales are to make Tlingit the language of the home and in the streets, and then to education and governance. In terms of domain reclamation, this task seems daunting as there are quite likely no current domains where Tlingit exists in a multilingual way that resembles diglossia. The same could be said for Haida and Tsimshian languages, perhaps with the exception of elderly couples who both speak the language and do not have frequent non-speaking visitors or a television that is on throughout the day. Most speakers are either very elderly and live with mostly non-speakers who all have visiting friends and relatives who are almost all non-speakers. Current speakers mostly use the language during cultural events or work events where the language is being taught or documented, but not necessarily in a multilingual home. This presents a conundrum for Tlingit in which: 1) there is a critical mass of intermediate learners who would benefit from a bilingual environment or one of immersion, but that space does not currently exist; 2) there are not enough speakers concentrated in any one geographical area to sustain a Tlingit language space, but having one would increase the rates and depths of second language learner fluency. Multilingual domains would also help learners connect with fluent speakers, many of whom talk about how difficult it is becoming to speak because they are not in environments to do so.

For the past twenty years there have been consistent efforts among the Tlingit to host language immersion gatherings in Glacier Bay, Hoonah, Haines, Juneau, Sitka, Yakutat, and Carcross. These are more or less attended by the same fifty participants with a small number of additional learners added over the years and a substantial loss of fluent elders. Many learners make great strides at these gatherings, but they occur about once per year so there is a need to provide additional language environments to increase the rate of fluency for second language speakers and reduce the time it takes to get them speaking. Multilingual environments where Tlingit lives full time would also help reduce the disorientation that learners feel when someone speaks to them in the language. With a

declining number of elderly birth speakers, there must be more opportunities for learners to listen to these speakers and bring them questions of grammar, concepts, and names for things, and for those elderly speakers to have opportunities to speak and be heard in the language. By using the language and making sure it exists in as many social and physical spaces as possible, the language will be normalized.

Efforts of late have focused on developing a critical mass of second language speakers in order to work with current birth speakers to create these immersion opportunities. At the current rate, however, this seems to be a steady decline where the number of speakers created could not possibly make up for the amount that will continue to be lost to time. There are approximately four fluent birth speakers of Tlingit who are under 60 years old, and the remaining 40 or so fluent birth speakers are over 80 years old. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer proposed their adapted GIDS for Tlingit nearly 20 years ago and the language is still in stage 1, although the Tlingit & Culture Language & Literacy (TCLL) program and Glacier Valley Elementary Tlingit classroom in Juneau, as well as school programs in Kake, Wrangell, Yakutat, Hoonah, and Sitka mean that stage 4 has also been achieved in those communities.

These efforts combine with classes at the University of Alaska Southeast as well as mentor-apprentice programs through the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and Sealaska Heritage Institute. There is a strong cohort of second language speakers who are working to deliver language learning opportunities to youth through schools and summer camps. What these efforts do not reveal or address, however, is the enormous gap that exists between 99% of Tlingit people and their language. The term *reversing language shift* is one of tremendous importance, but it seems like a distant dream and impossibility if an Indigenous population no longer recognizes or values their own language. Barbara Meek, in working with the Kaska language in the Yukon Territory of Canada, describes a concept that is relevant to bringing the Tlingit people back to their language and then their language back to domains on their ancestral homeland. Meek states:

Thus, language revitalization involves the reconstitution not only of some grammar, but of the indexical orders that link a grammar to a complex of meaning emergent through a world of

experience. The partial reproduction or continuity of these worlds of experience becomes lost, erased, or forgotten when the indexical links are shattered; the emotional scars of residential schooling and assimilation fade, the significance of taboo practices becomes muted, ways of knowing are silenced. As endangered languages are reconstituted, so are the contexts within which they are used; the appropriateness and the effectiveness, intertwined, of such linguistic phenomena sustain infinite possibilities for both successful interaction and communicative collapse. The opportunity for contradiction abounds; but where might these contradictions reside? ... Two theoretical avenues that speak to this question are language ideology and modernity, with a focus on disjuncture in particular. All situations of language endangerment and revitalization have points of discontinuity or contradiction, moments where practices and ideas about language diverge. I call this phenomenon *sociolinguistic disjuncture* (cf. Foucault [1968] 1972; see also Appadurai 1996). Sociolinguistic disjunctures can appear between ideas and practices, between practices, or between ideas shared by a group or across groups—between indexical orders.<sup>13</sup>

These are concepts that compliment the GIDS when it comes to language continuity movements in Southeast Alaska: modernity and disjuncture. Defining and mending some of the disjunctures are necessary before moving towards diglossia. The people and their language must be reconnected at a level large enough to sustain a continuity movement, and this is something that should happen as a joint venture between language advocates and planners of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian.

The disjunctures that exist between Southeast Alaska Indigenous people and their languages represent a nearly complete separation from heritage languages on a daily basis for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The concept of language continuity or language revitalization becomes an insurmountable challenge so long as people feel they can *survive* and actually can *thrive* without their languages, and also if heritage languages become foreign languages on their own ancestral homeland. In order to begin providing resolve to such gaping disjuncture, we must return to Fishman's "call for cultural reconstruction and for greater cultural-self-regulation" and figure out how and

<sup>13</sup> Meek, Barbra A. *We Are Our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabaskan Community*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012), 50–51.



where to apply it. These reconstructions and self-regulations will have to become the methods of reconstructing domains and the concepts must be self-applied to Indigenous cultures and also to the surrounding hegemonic cultures of their communities and regions.

## 6.6 Current Efforts and Organizations

Chapter 1 covered an introduction to the Tlingit language, and this section adds to that with descriptions of currently known efforts to revitalize the Tlingit language. The various programs operating in a number of communities are the result of dedication, brilliance, advocacy, courage, and collaborations. The additional activities proposed in this chapter are not meant to label anything currently being undertaken as inefficient, but instead seeks to add to current efforts by incorporating strategies and activities that have proven effective in Indigenous language revitalization.

There are currently active pockets of language revitalization efforts in Carcross, Teslin, Yakutat, Sitka, Hoonah, Wrangell, Seattle, and Juneau. The number of fluent elders who have total mastery of the Tlingit language is probably down to about 20, with the largest concentrations in Teslin and Juneau. The largest pockets of learners are in Juneau, but there are pockets who are connected through local and distance learning in Whitehorse, Yakutat, Sitka, Hoonah, Ketchikan, and Wrangell. Yakutat, Sitka, and Juneau operate master-apprentice programs that create second language speakers with high rates of fluency in the language, although it is common for comprehension to be advanced among apprentices while speaking abilities remain at the intermediate level. There have been no birth speakers in over fifty years, and only recently have children been raised with the language, with a handful of children able to comprehend and none who can speak fluently.

Teslin has a language program in the Teslin Tlingit Council and has a high number of birth speakers, including some who are in their late fifties, which are among the youngest known birth speakers. They also recently passed *Lingít Yoo X'atángi ƙa Haa Shagóon*, which is First Nations legislation “that identifies key priorities and methods to inform and support the actions of the Deisleen Lingít government specific to the advancement of Lingít Yoo X'atángi in the Deisleen Lingít community, work place and for the delivery of Teslin Tlingit Council government services.”<sup>14</sup> There are

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<sup>14</sup> Teslin Tlingit Council. *Lingít Yoo X'atángi ƙa Haa Shagóon*. Statute Of The Teslin Tlingit Council, July 12, 2017, 2.



families with relatively high numbers of speakers, and three known second language speakers, and several fluent understander. The language is in the community through street signs, and is present in the school, but not yet at a level significant enough to ensure the creation of new speakers.

Carcross has a language program through the Carcross-Tagish First Nations that includes an early care and preschool program that brings language to the children on a regular basis, but is not a full immersion program. They have three fluent speakers and two second language speakers in their community, and the language is present in the community and in the school, but is too minimal to create new speakers. Atlin has no known speakers, and their language program is currently inactive, but was linked to Teslin and Carcross through Lingít Language Champions, an organization that existed for the language advocacy but is no longer active. Teslin, Carcross, and Atlin are the Daḵká Ḵwáan (People of the Inland), and they work together periodically to create language camps and other activities.

Yakutat has a mentor-apprentice program that is run through the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, and has created two speakers with advanced fluency in speaking and three speakers who have advanced comprehension and intermediate speaking abilities. They operated a successful mentor-apprentice program until the last fluent elder of their community passed away in 2017, but recently opened the first Tlingit language nest in January 2018 and have six teachers and fourteen children who have made great strides in understanding and using Tlingit. There have been Tlingit language classes in the public school, and many of the children have a high awareness of cultural identity that includes knowledge of their Tlingit name and clan through previous school-based activities. Recently, the focus has shifted to operating and maintaining the language nest, including efforts to increase the fluency of all teachers, recruiting new families, and strategizing for maintenance and growth by examining physical spaces in the community and increasing partnerships with regional Head Start programs operated by Central Council of Tlingit & Haida and also the Yakutat school.

Sitka has a mentor-apprentice program with two elders and two apprentices who participate in a program administered by the Sealaska Heritage Institute in Juneau. The Sitka Tribe of Alaska has a team of teachers who bring language and culture into the school, including second language speakers

who have achieved fluency. Hoonah has a language program that operates through the Hoonah School District and creates language and culture learning opportunities for children of all levels, and have two fluent second language speakers. The programs in Sitka and Hoonah have many similarities in terms of high levels of devotion in their teachers, who have high expectations for what their students should know. There may not be enough intensive language learning opportunities to create new speakers, but there is enough exposure to generate interest and put students on a path to future fluency.

Kake has a fluent second language learner as a teacher, and she works with three fluent elders in the community in a mentor-apprentice program and she also teaches Tlingit in the school. The children in Kake have consistent language exposure and a strong cultural foundation, which would create speakers if linked to programs in other places to help create a network of language learners. Their program needs to provide more support to their lead teacher in order to avoid isolation, and the community needs encouragement to use the language and increase its prestige and normalization.

Wrangell has a program that brings fluent speakers in from time to time because there is only one second language speaker there with intermediate-high fluency. They are building a strong program, but the lack of access to speakers and limited fluency in the community creates a need to build a stronger external network that continues to bring resources into the community.

The Klukwan and Haines communities have four birth speakers, and one of them is active in the community and Klukwan school as a language teacher. They recently started a Tlingit family language program that meets once a week. They have several second language learners, but none of them have reached an intermediate level of fluency. The growth of their program will depend upon increased language use by the community, full integration into education, and linking to activities in other communities.

Ketchikan has a language program and Tlingit is being taught to a group of Indigenous youth and also during community classes by three second language learners who are achieving an intermediate level of proficiency. There is one fluent speaker in the community, but that speaker is currently disconnected from language program activities. Similar to other communities, but probably even more so, the development of future speakers will depend on second language speakers achieving high

levels of fluency and developing programs that are fully integrated into the community and schools, and they will have to link to other activities in the region.

Klawock and Craig have had language programs previously, but there are no known programs operating now and opportunities to create speakers do not exist at this time. The same could be said for Petersburg, Angoon, Pelican, and Skagway. These communities need to develop strategies to create language learning through interacting in regional language camps, distance learning opportunities, and developing second language speakers who will remain or return to the community and become teachers. Without dedicated efforts to bring the language back to these communities, it is highly unlikely that any speakers will be created.

The largest concentration of programs is in Juneau, where five organizations have a number of programs that contribute to the creation of new speakers. The Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) has a strong history of hiring teachers and fluent speakers to create teaching materials, document the language, and host language immersion activities, but the organization has undergone a philosophical shift to focus on cultural activities like art, dancing, and archiving. Recently, SHI renewed its commitment to language by developing master-apprentice program teams in Juneau and Sitka. There are also translation and publication processes in the works, and a massive placename documentation project that was recently released to the public through an interactive large-screen tablet. A recent *Voices of Our Ancestors* language summit was held in Juneau by SHI that had over 200 attendees and included live translations for participants, which had never happened before at a gathering of this size. The summit was filmed and is available for viewing on YouTube.<sup>15</sup>

Goldbelt Heritage Foundation has over a half-dozen Tlingit language teachers on staff, including fluent birth speakers, and are the current leaders in curriculum development. Their organizational focus in terms of language is to teach through existing public schools in the Juneau area, and to run summer culture camps that feature language learning opportunities for young people. They have the resources financially and administratively to create speakers, and would certainly do so if they more openly supported language nest, immersion schools, and then Tlingit language medium school efforts.

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<sup>15</sup> "Sealaska Heritage Institute." *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTOynWRsHoEDYfirw8oWV3w>

However, they are creating the highest volume of teaching materials and continue to secure grants to keep teachers working on the language. They create a strong language presence within the school district, but their ability to create speakers is hindered by the limited time and curricular equity that is allotted to the Tlingit language by Juneau School District (JSD) curriculum.

The Juneau School District has one teacher who is a fluent second language learner, and several paraprofessionals who have advanced language proficiency. There are also a number of teachers who have culturally-relevant classrooms, but themselves need more language skills in order to confidently make language learning a regular part of the curriculum. By the strength of these teachers and the Alaska Native advocates they have in JSD administration, they have dramatically increased the abilities to create speakers within a school district that has never made the Tlingit language an elevated part of the curriculum. Most language learning occurs in optional programs that often lack the time and deep content to create fluent learners. There is one elementary teacher who fully incorporates language learning into his classroom at one of the schools, where students have the highest chance of reaching fluency, but that chance diminishes once they age out. The amount of time spent in Tlingit diminishes greatly once students move beyond elementary school. Language advocates have long argued that this diminished time is a result of a curriculum that sees Tlingit language as unnecessary beyond elementary school because of deep-seated beliefs in the superiority of English and the childish nature of Indigenous languages and programs.

The University of Alaska Southeast has language classes from 1xx to 4xx levels, including Reading & Writing, Tlingit Oral Literature, Master-Apprentice, and other special topics classes. Enrollment is typically an average of 10 students per class, although the numbers are much higher in lower level classes and lower in upper level classes. Tuition is often a barrier, as a typical 4 credit language class has gone from \$600 per semester in 2011 to over \$1,000. There is one fluent second language speaker who is a tenured faculty member, and additional second language speakers who are adjuncts. At any given time, there are about 50 seats filled for Tlingit language, including regular students who sign on via distance learning from Whitehorse, Carcross, Teslin, Sitka, Ketchikan, and Washington State. Outside of intensive learning camps, UAS is the only other place where advanced Tlingit grammar

is studied, including a concentration on verb conjugation, translating the recorded words of elder speakers, and interactions with fluent speakers who visit classes. The other place where this has occurred is the University of British Columbia Vancouver, where Dzéiwsh James Crippen taught and actively produced material for advanced second language learners. UAS also partners with various organizations for language documentation efforts, and has produced over a hundred videos<sup>16</sup> of fluent speakers over the past five years, many of which include subtitled translations and transcriptions to help language learners understand the content. Speakers have been documented in a number of communities, and the resulting work in transcription and translation has contributed greatly to the fluency of some advanced second language learners.

The Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Central Council) is one of the largest Tribes in Alaska, and voted several years ago to start a language program. Central Council also passed a statute to start a Tribal Schools program, and currently has ambitions to start a language nest, k–12 medium school, and a Tribal college. The language nest and medium school would be total immersion programs, but Central Council has struggled to figure out how to open the doors to these programs. A Lead Teacher has been hired and the first students have been identified, but there is no director of the Language Program. Efforts are undertaken by a leadership committee, and the majority of its membership lack knowledge of second language acquisition and fluency in the Tlingit language. Nevertheless, a space has been located for the language nest and several initial steps have been undertaken to prepare the Tlingit language immersion/medium school for opening its doors in the near future.

There are no children who speak the Tlingit language fluently, but the development of immersion programs, language nests, and medium schools will allow for the transition from non-Tlingit speaking children to a core of families who are raising children with Tlingit as one of their first languages. This has begun recently, but to date children are able to develop the ability to comprehend the language but not to speak it fluently. There are several children who are close, and with the right environment will begin producing the language with fluency. Those children will then open the doors to future

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<sup>16</sup> [youtube.com/UASANLS](https://www.youtube.com/UASANLS)

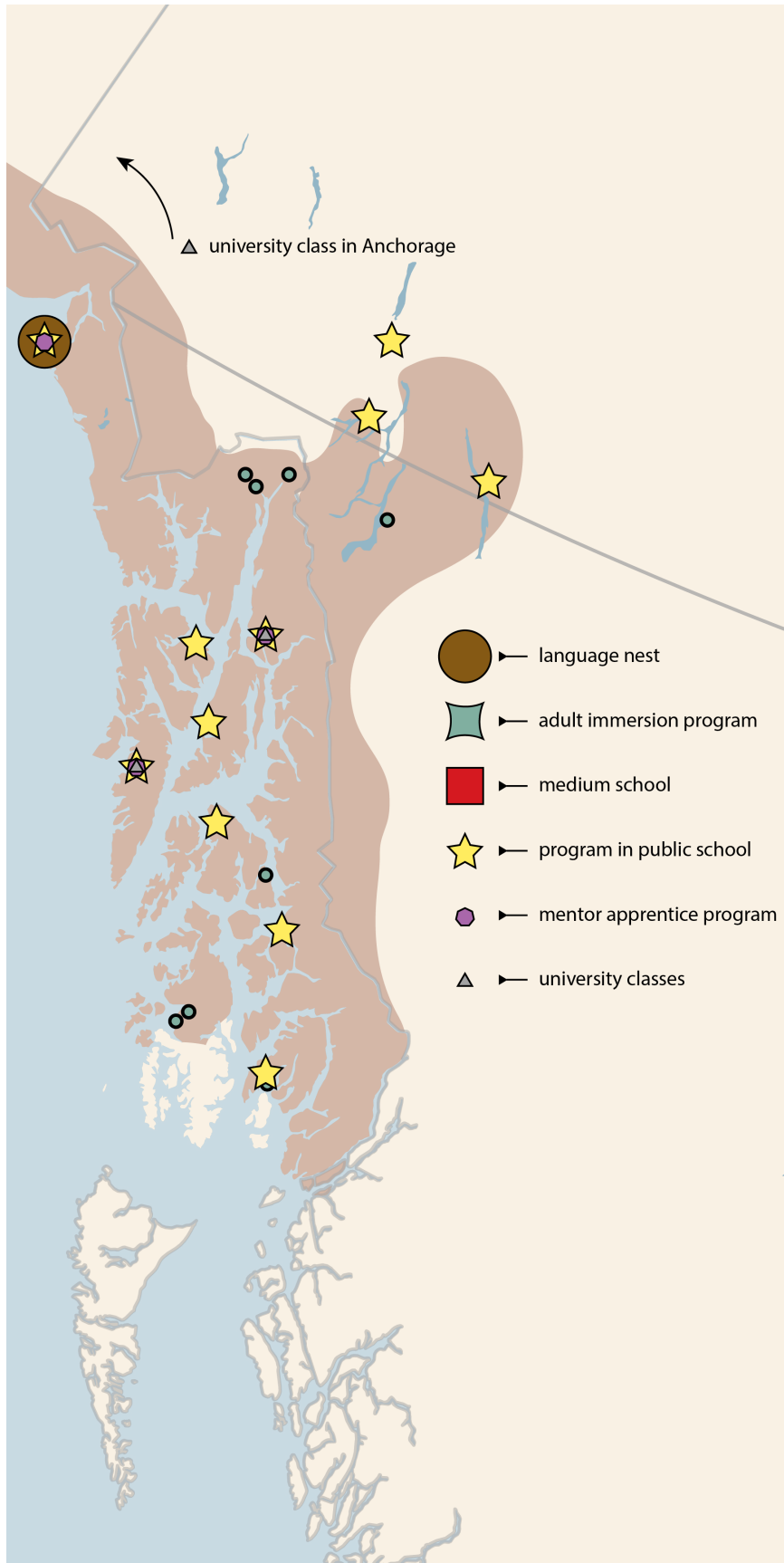


Figure 17: Current Tlingit Language Activities

possibilities, such as Nāwahī, where 33% of students are first language Hawaiian speakers,<sup>17</sup> which means birth speakers are being produced.

There are four linguists doing linguistic field work in the language, although only one of them is currently immersed in the language community full time. Keri Eggleston focuses on translation projects and documenting verbs, resulting in a tremendous improvement in understanding how verbs function and how to better teach verb conjugation methods. Her work is housed at the Alaska Native Knowledge Network and includes a collection of over 1,000 verbs that are conjugated in different ways for users to quickly locate.<sup>18</sup> James Crippen is creating a grammatical analysis of the entire Tlingit language, and has helped explain nearly all phenomena found within the language. He has created academic papers contributing Tlingit material to the linguistic field, and more importantly has created guidebooks and papers that are extremely useful to advanced learners and help people understand some of the inner workings and big picture items when it comes to Tlingit grammar and structure. Seth Cable works on concepts of time and some structural issues, and like Eggleston and Crippen, he is quick to share his work with the learning community. Alice Taff coordinates a number of activities through grant writing and program management, including a project that documented, transcribed, and translated conversational language, which is an aspect that was largely absent from the wealth of Tlingit documentation.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 17 summarizes much of the information provided above on current Tlingit language activities and locates them on a map. All of these various individuals and organizations involved in these activities need to unify goals, align current projects to avoid duplication of efforts, and come together for more coordinated efforts to revitalize Tlingit. Centralizing curriculum development and storage would greatly increase the knowledge of what has been done, what is being done, and what the current needs are. Establishing a clear path to fluency for second language learners would help align efforts, place students, and demystify what it takes to learn to speak Tlingit. Organizations should

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<sup>17</sup> Wilson, William and Kaunoe Kamanā. "Insights from Indigenous Language Immersion in Hawai'i," 45.

<sup>18</sup> Eggleston, Keri. "Online Tlingit Verb Dictionary." *Alaska Native Knowledge Network*. University of Alaska Fairbanks. Retrieved from <http://ankn.uaf.edu/~tlingitverbs/>

<sup>19</sup> Taff, Alice. "Woosh Een áyá Yoo X̱'atudli.átk: Tlingit Conversation Documentation Project, 2007-2013." *University of Alaska Southeast*. Retrieved from [http://www.uas.alaska.edu/arts\\_sciences/humanities/alaska-languages/cuped/vid-eo-conv/](http://www.uas.alaska.edu/arts_sciences/humanities/alaska-languages/cuped/vid-eo-conv/)

be clear about how they support language nests and medium schools so there is collaboration on creating birth speakers. Also, a number of individuals within the Tlingit community need to recognize and avoid destructive behaviors that create environments where people would rather work on their own than be subject to criticisms that are hurtful and rarely followed up with productive solutions. All of these problems can be overcome, but there must be a higher level of awareness of overall goals and the ways in which all members can contribute in positive ways to the creation of speakers and solidification of the Tlingit Language Movement in ways that protect older ways of speaking while allowing new topics and domains to enter the language.

A language movement also needs to rely upon this generation of birth speakers. This is our only chance to connect current children who are learning the language from birth with the last generation that did so. Those elders were around when the language was everywhere, and they will help bridge the many gaps the language community has in terms of how to say things, how to think about things, and how to create a language movement that is rooted in the Tlingit thought world instead of merely translating the Euroamerican English world into Tlingit. This means that language documentation should be happening on a regular basis, elders should be regularly consulted on the plans and directions of the language movement, and recorded Tlingit from the past hundred years should be brought in the classroom as much as possible.



## 6.7 A Tlingit Road Map for the Next Thirty Years

In order to secure a future of growth for the Tlingit language, the following should occur in the immediate future: annual meeting of all invested parties, establishing a central curriculum office, solidifying goals for partial immersion and full-immersion programs for children, development of adult immersion learning programs, establishing total immersion language nests, establishing a k–12 language medium school, developing a strategy for language programs in all places where a high concentration of Tlingit people reside, establishing a Tribal college, developing a Tlingit Language Media Network, and developing a Philosophy of Tlingit Education. In order to achieve these goals, the language movement must be elevated above individuals, organizations, and the tensions that sometimes exist between them. The timely development of each of these areas to the absolute highest quality possible will pave the way for a Tlingit Language Movement. At the core of this movement is the relationship between organizations, second language speakers, elderly birth speakers, and children who can be raised in the language. The components of this plan are presented here as a starting point.

Woosh Kaanáx̱ Awdi.át • Annual Meeting for Tlingit Language Organizations	
GOAL:	To meet annually and come to agreement on goals and plans, review activities in relation to those plans, and share ideas and resources.
OPERATING PHILOSOPHY:	Haa dachx̱ánx̱'i sáani kagéiyi yís k'idéin woosh yéi jigax̱tudanéi. For our little grandchildren, we are going to work well together.
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:	Establish quarterly meetings and operational protocols.

The language community has historically come together during meetings of the Southeast Alaska Language Consortium, which includes Haida and Tsimshian language advocates, and also during times when people have gathered in Juneau for conferences and cultural celebrations. These are usually one day meetings that allow for networking and sharing some concepts at a very general level. An annual meeting should be held that spans several days with the goal of reviewing Tlingit language revitalization efforts. It would begin by gathering elderly birth speakers and hearing from them in the language, and then hearing updates from organizations who have language activities. Work groups would then review activities, identify needs & sources of income, and clearly identify what activities will occur & when, focusing on maximizing effectiveness and efficiency.

The current Tlingit language programs operate without centralized goals and plans, and this results in learners stopping their studies or being stuck at various levels of intermediate fluency. By working more closely together and agreeing on fluency scales and assessment methods, teachers and coordinators will know where a learner is and what steps will help them achieve higher levels of fluency. Tlingit language programs should have four basic tracks to fluency, categorized by the method of learning needed: 1) children raised with the language and targeted for Tlingit language medium/immersion programs, 2) children raised with language exposure with language classes in English schools, 3) adults with language exposure and high levels of comprehension, and 4) adults with limited exposure and little to no familiarity to Tlingit. Specific strategies and steps will be determined for each track that determines teaching methods and materials and assessment methods, and learner accomplishments should be celebrated through graduation ceremonies and additional recognition at the annual meeting.

X'úx' Wududliyéx Daakahídi · Central Curriculum Office	
GOAL:	To centralize curriculum develop in order to catalog and share all Tlingit curriculum and streamline new curriculum development processes.
OPERATING PHILOSOPHY:	Woosh wutudihéin haa yoo x'atángi ách áwé haa jeet has aawatee haa léelk'w hás. We share our language because our grandparents gave it to us.
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:	Locate funding to develop a central curriculum office that is responsible for gathering, cataloging, sharing, and archiving all existing curriculum and developing new materials in concert with elders, teachers, and program coordinators.

Dating back to the early 1960s, language teachers have developed a vast array of second language learning materials, but no one has ever cataloged what has been made and the various ways those items can be used. Organizing curriculum development efforts will reveal what gaps exist and help determine what should be developed next. Part of the problem is that organizations and individuals tend to take ownership of their materials to fulfill grant requirements and show board members that the organization is indeed being active. These organizations tend to move directly into implementing materials in their own programs, and often fail to share the material openly to see if it could be used

elsewhere. Time and effort are wasted when materials are duplicated because individuals are unaware that it already exists, or they want to create the same thing their own way instead of looking for a newly needed item.

A central curriculum office could be developed by pooling the efforts of the primary contributors of Tlingit materials in print and electronic media. This would provide more overall direction while increasing the volume and quality of curriculum production. In order to make this happen, all organizations working on Tlingit would commit to developing a central office where curriculum ideas are handed off to a team that includes an Illustrator, Graphic Designer, and Lead Editor. Each of these staff members need high proficiency in Tlingit language and culture to make sure that curriculum developed is culturally appropriate, spelled correctly & checked for grammatical errors, and is produced using high quality materials in ways that have a distinctive branding for the Tlingit Language Movement. Materials can be reproduced using on-demand printing methods, could give recognition to all organizations involved in the curriculum office, and the risk of losing materials can be reduced by putting material on shared drives and a central website. The team would also implement data backup plans and responsible archiving methodology in partnership with the Alaska Native Language Center, Alaska State Historical Library, and the Sealaska Heritage Institute Archives.

Yan Has Awsinéi Aḵ Yaa Gaḵtoo.át Yé · Adult Immersion Program	
GOAL:	To create fluent speakers as quickly and efficiently as possible by fostering healthy and safe Tlingit immersion environments.
OPERATING PHILOSOPHY:	A deilí yáḵ yatee woosh yoo x'atul.átgi yé, ách áwé kusaḵán tin a tóonáḵ gaḵtoo.áat The places where we speak to each other are like a safe harbor, and because of that we are going to enter them with love.
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:	Locate funding to create & operate a Tlingit Language Center, with enough teachers to meet demand, utilizing effective and efficient techniques of Indigenous language acquisition.

As children gain fluency in Tlingit, the odds increase that they will be going home as the most capable Tlingit speaker in their household. This can create or heighten a sense of alienation from the language for their families. To alleviate and prevent this dislocation within families, a new program

should be developed to immediately increase adult fluency rates, incorporating existing and historical efforts to create second language speakers of Tlingit. Existing language classes must move towards immersion environments in order to teach through the language, immersion gatherings must happen more often and more naturally, and new program activities should be developed that increase the frequency and focus on immersion gatherings.

A long term plan would utilize a “language house” or “language center” where people can visit for short term activities like adult and family learning programs in partial immersion, and where resident learners of various levels can live together for periods of time in full immersion. Model programs could be the Chopaka Immersion House, where participants reside in an immersion house for 5 months, studying Nsyilxcn (Okanagan) 6 hours per day<sup>20</sup> or the Mohawk Adult Immersion Program where participants also reside in an immersion house, “studying and speaking six hours a day, five days a week for two school years.”<sup>21</sup>

At the most minimal level there would be classes, immersion retreats, and intensive learning camps for adult learners. Eventually, a house should be purchased where committed learners can lease a room and live in an immersion environment with a teacher and visiting speakers. These models need to be explored and delivered across Tlingit territory. In addition, strategies must be developed for communities that do not have enough speakers to support such efforts, so there are learning and exposure opportunities wherever there are Tlingit people. This would include strategies for Anchorage, Whitehorse, Seattle, and San Francisco, which are all outside of Tlingit territory, but contain a high number of Tlingit people.

The language house would operate with a primary teacher and coordinator, who helps incorporate existing curriculum, develop needed curriculum, recruit and prepare learners, and coordinate visiting elders & other instructors or speakers. The primary teacher would also provide necessary lessons to prepare learners for living in the language for short or long term residences, and also promote the program, find new participants, and contribute to the solidarity of the Tlingit Language Movement

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<sup>20</sup> Johnson, Sʔimlaʔxw Michele K. “Yaʔtmín Cqwəlqwilt Nixw, Uʔ Nixw, Uʔ Nixw, I Need To Speak More, And More, And More,” 137.

<sup>21</sup> Bellemare, Andrea. “Mohawk Immersion School Founder Honoured By Wilfrid Laurier University.” *CBC News*. Last Updated: Jun 23, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/aboriginal/story/1.3124147>.

by participating with other language activities and initiating community learning. The Tlingit Adult Immersion Program will create new environments and encourage the creation and strengthening of relationships with existing speakers. All of these activities will be done with the second language speaker in mind, focusing on safe spaces and maximizing the confidence of all involved. In addition, consideration will be given to how adults contribute to the Tlingit Language Movement by focusing on the following spheres:

**Increase Fluency of Teachers**

- In order to develop effective language education programs with higher rates of fluency, new teachers must be created who are highly fluent and understand Tlingit immersion teaching methodologies, assessments, and the path to fluency.
- This sphere focuses on increasing adult fluency and the ability to pass the language along in natural (home & community) and artificial (classroom & camps) settings.

**Increase Use of Language in the Home with Children**

- In order to ensure reversal of language shift, adults will be given tools and methods to bring the language home and elevate it to a place of power and use among families.
- This sphere focuses on increasing adult fluency in day-to-day language use among families and strategies to create a bilingual home.

**Increase Use of Language Among Adults**

- The language domain of adult second language speakers is any place where there is more than one speaker, and this is attained by convincing second language learners to stop using English with one another.
- This sphere focuses on changing social relationships from bilingual to monolingual Tlingit for learners of the language, which ensures fluency by making it the expected and exclusive means of communication between learners.

**Increasing Appropriate Language Use at Cultural and Public Functions**

- Tlingit cultural gatherings should privilege the Tlingit language, and in order to ensure proper use of language and the depth of language expected at such events, efforts will be undertaken

to move ceremonial spaces back to Tlingit domains.

- This sphere focuses on developing the specialized vocabulary, concepts, relationships, and expectations for language performances in ceremony and social gatherings, preparing second language speakers by providing opportunities to practice and receive feedback from knowledgeable speakers and elders.

**Provide necessary supports for the Fluent Understander of Tlingit**

- There is a population of Tlingit people who can understand the language, but have difficulty producing the language outside of common words and phrases. This group is critical to the revitalization of Tlingit because they can often assist with making sure sounds and concepts in the language are being accurately conveyed. The terms used to describe this group have been partial speaker, latent speaker, semi-speaker, and dormant speaker.<sup>22</sup> Some Tlingit language leaders felt these terms were not respectful, so the term Fluent Understander has been introduced by L.Jaakk Alice Taff and has been used to refer to this population.
- The current methods for teaching Tlingit may not be effective for the Fluent Understander, so teachers in the adult immersion programs need to assess current resources and programs, and then develop methods and materials that are effective for helping those who can understand the language and unlock the speaking component.
- This sphere focuses on determining the blocks that might exist for the understander, and creating environments for them to speak with one another and to increase their ability to construct the language in safe environments.

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<sup>22</sup> Grinevald, Colette and Michel Bert. "Speakers and Communities." *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*. Ed Peter K. Austin, and Julia Sallabank. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 50–51.

Haa Yoo X̱'atángi Ḵudi · Tlingit Language Nest	
GOAL:	Develop early care and preschool facilities that creates a home environment for children to interact in a Tlingit-speaking environment while preparing them for a K–12 medium school.
OPERATING PHILOSOPHY:	Haa neilx̱'í yee haa yoo x̱'atángi ḵugaagastee, aagáa x̱'aakeidíx̱ has guxsatee haa yátx̱'i. Let our language live inside our homes, and then our children will become seeds.
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:	Locate funding to create & operate a fully-licensed Tlingit Early Care & Preschool Center that creates first language speakers in Tlingit.

If we look across the world, there is one thing in common with places where Indigenous populations are revitalizing their languages: they are running their own schools and are doing so in full immersion environments. Language immersion nests and medium schools are key to reversing language shift, and in Tlingit country are being developed and implemented with inspiration and guidance from 'Aha Pūnana Leo (the Hawaiian Language Nest) and Ke Kula 'o Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u (Nāwahī, the Hawaiian Language Medium School). The language nest is a complete immersion environment where the primary task is developing a home environment where children are raised in the Tlingit language. In this environment, the language is not taught but is instead used as the only means of communication. Children who are new to the program are not allowed to speak until they begin speaking in the language, which they will do in a relatively short period of time. If the teachers and coordinators speak English, then the likelihood of children using the language is highly unlikely, but if the language nest team can make it through the tough first few months of implementing a strict Tlingit-only environment that is loving, encouraging, and supported by fluent elders and children who have been raised with the language, then the children are guaranteed to become fluent speakers of the language.

The process began in Yakutat with the opening of Haa Yoo X̱'atángi Hídi in January 2018. The nest operated for five months, took a summer break, and then opened again in the late fall for academic year 2019. In Juneau, a lead teacher has been working of developing the Tlingit & Haida language nest and recently received funding to hire Elder Teachers and second language speaker Teacher



Assistants. The challenge will be making the switch from *teaching* the language to non-speakers to *using* the language with children who are expected to comprehend and speak the language in a home environment where Tlingit is the only language they hear. Both language nests are currently working on assessments so they can determine what benchmarks children should be reaching and how the days should be structured in terms of activities and content.

Until recently, no children had been raised in Tlingit since the 1950s, and that results in difficulty in recalling phrases used with children, even for fluent speakers. This is evident in a video recorded at a Tlingit Clan Conference where fluent elders gathered to collect phrases for parents raising their children in the language, and collectively had a hard time remembering essential phrases used with babies and small children.<sup>23</sup> Other difficulties will be navigating strict early care requirements enforced by the State of Alaska, and finding a budget that does not make raising children in the language inaccessible for people in poverty and those in the middle class whose income makes them ineligible for tuition assistance. Grants and private fundraising efforts will hopefully offset some costs and keep the program afloat until long-term sustainability can be achieved.

Át Kudatáan Hídi · A K–12 Tlingit Language Medium School	
GOAL:	K–12 medium school that delivers all content through the Tlingit language and through the Tlingit worldview, with a focus on science, technology, engineering, art, and math.
OPERATING PHILOSOPHY:	Haa yoo x'atángi tóonáx has aguxsakóo ch'a ldakát yá Lingít káa ła wáa sá Haa Tlagu Kwáanx'i Yán aadé s kunóogu yé. Through our language they will come to know about everything on the world, including the way our Ancient Ones used to do things.
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:	Build a Tribal School through a self-governance compact with the Bureau of Indian Education, and and also a funding agreement with the State of Alaska.

One of the most difficult, and therefore substantial, steps in a language movement is an Indigenous language medium school. An immersion school is made for students who do not speak the language, whereas an Indigenous language medium school is designed to enroll children who already speak the language. Often immersion schools are partial immersion and only teach certain subjects

<sup>23</sup> Eggleston, Keri, Alice Taff, and Lance Twitchell. “2013 (06.a.2) — Gathering Tlingit Phrases for Children.” *YouTube*. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/ntD88TKC7ME>



and often only lower grades through the target language. Total immersion and Indigenous language medium schools teach all content through the target language and Indigenous language medium schools are also administrated and operated through the Indigenous language. Such extensive use of Indigenous languages fly in the face of deep-seated racist beliefs that most school content cannot be taught in an Indigenous, much less all content along with school administration and operations, as stated by a recent candidate for the Juneau School Board.<sup>24</sup> Early efforts to develop a total Tlingit language immersion/medium school based on the Public Charter School model used for the K-8 portion of Nāwahī School were adjusted once it became clear to the advocates of a Tlingit medium school that the Juneau School District did not support the school. Current efforts are exploring a Tribal school model that would be independent of the Juneau School District and would partner with other Alaska Native schools across the state.

Unless the community and structure of school systems is more balanced in term of school boards and their understanding of the high functions of Indigenous languages as well as the needs of Indigenous people, then charter schools are an unlikely solution in Alaska. While it is beneficial to combat racist generalizations, efforts should be directed towards developing the school in the method that results in the highest degree of curriculum flexibility and increased funding. One member of the Tlingit medium school planning committee suggested accessing funding through the Bureau of Indian Education through a self-governance contract that would allow Central Council to run its own Tribal School. Funding for this school will come from a self-governance contract with the Bureau of Education, and additional funding would be pursued through the State of Alaska, grant writing, and private fundraising.

A K–12 Tlingit Medium school that is modeled after Nāwahī and Ayaprun Elitnaurvik that teaches all content through the Tlingit language will produce generations that are fluent in the language and are able to develop a balanced education. In addition to being technologically savvy and ready for college and careers, students would be more likely to succeed in and out of school because the Tlingit perspective is less disorienting for Tlingit people and allows the voices of Tlingit Ancestors to

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<sup>24</sup> Jenkins, Elizabeth. "Juneau School Board candidates split on STEM charter school." *KTOO Public Media*. September 28, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.ktoo.org/2015/09/28/juneau-school-board-candidates-split-stem-charter-school/>

be a guiding force in education. The medium school benefits students who function better in non-standardized environments that require elevated creativity, intellect, and teamwork, with a focus on place-based education. In order to prepare for this, new teachers must be developed who have the proficiency to teach content through Tlingit. Certification and licensing processes are being developed for: 1) skilled teachers who do not have a master's degree, 2) fluent elders who need teaching skills, and 3) current teachers who want to teach in the medium school but need increased fluency.

The school was originally intended to open in 2017 beginning with a small kindergarten class and adding one grade per year while also gradually increasing the size of its student body. The school was originally intended to graduate a 6th grade class in 2023, 8th grade in 2025, and have its first senior graduating class in 2029. The current goal is to start the kindergarten in 2020. The primary goal of the Tlingit language medium school is the revitalization of Tlingit through use and the production of new speakers, an added benefit is the potential of improved efficiency in Alaskan education. A 55% statewide graduation rate for Alaska Natives<sup>25</sup> is unacceptable for Tribal leaders, State leaders, and especially for parents. When school board candidates run for seats in the future, perhaps they will ponder whether monolingual English education is the actual disadvantage. In the meantime, the Tlingit medium school will model itself after a Hawaiian immersion school that reports a fourteen year history of a 100% graduation rate and 80% college attendance rate.<sup>26</sup>

This school could be made into a laboratory school in Alaska, which would be beneficial to all Alaskans during a challenging budget climate. Alaska's rural schools are failing Alaska children, and do not meet the needs of Alaska Native students, who are 27% of the total Alaska public school student population.<sup>27</sup> If Alaska Native leaders factor in the total economic power they have in terms of head count dollars, Indian education dollars, and more, then Alaska Native peoples will have more political control in co-governing education. An Alaska Native co-governed education system promises

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25 National Center for Education Statistics. "Table 1. Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), by race/ethnicity and selected demographics for the United States, the 50 states, and the District of Columbia: School year 2013–14." *Common Core of Data*. Retrieved from [http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR\\_RE\\_and\\_characteristics\\_2013-14.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2013-14.asp)

26 Wilson, William. "USDE Violations of NAIA and the Testing Boycott at Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u School." *Journal of American Indian Education* 51.3 (2012), pp. 30-45.

27 National Congress of American Indians. "Education." *NCAI*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncai.org/policy-issues/education-health-human-services/education>.

a much brighter future for all Alaskan children, and provides a more functional education system for all, instead of the colonial, blind, and deaf system that is currently in place. The key to doing so is establishing a statewide Alaska Native Schools Consortium that negotiates compact agreements with the Bureau of Indian Education and the State of Alaska to deliver education in rural Alaska communities that have high percentages of Alaska Natives. These schools could be language medium schools or culturally-based schools, depending on the strength of the language, and the network of homegrown and capable educators could reshape the landscape of education in Alaska into a model of success and health.

At Wuskóowu Daakahídi • College of Alaska Native Languages	
GOAL:	Teacher preparation, adult fluency, and ongoing contribution to scholarship in Tlingit linguistics and Indigenous language revitalization that supports all language revitalization efforts in Southeast Alaska.
OPERATING PHILOSOPHY:	Kinde shaksitán shaa yát wé aas kudzitee, ách áwé yá t'l'átk tayee woosh jín has alshát, ka uháan tsú woosh jín tulshát yeisú haa yoo x̱'atángi tin. The trees are up on the steep mountain because beneath the earth they are holding hands, and we too are still holding each others' hands in our language.
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:	Locate funding and develop partnerships to develop a Tribal College that can support the language revitalization movements in Southeast Alaska, utilizing the input and expertise of diverse voices within the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people.

In order to continue developing Tlingit language nests, building a language medium school, and increasing the effectiveness of language programs in public schools, programs need to be adjusted at the University of Alaska (UA). The current courses and programs have the ability to create fluent speakers, but only if the students takes extraordinary steps to use the language and continue to practice outside of the classroom on their own or in groups of dedicated learners. UAS is the only place that currently offers intermediate and advanced studies in Tlingit, and students can pursue an undergraduate degree in Alaska Native Languages and Studies. Beyond the undergraduate degree, however, students must go into either education or linguistics in order to further their studies. Education is available at UAS, but their masters degrees in education do not allow for continued language studies and graduates typically regress in their abilities to speak. Linguistics programs

require traveling outside of Tlingit territory, and also do not allow room for continued study of Tlingit.

In order to remedy this, the University of Alaska should develop the College of Alaska Native Languages, which has the mission of creating speakers and certified teachers of Alaska Native languages and contributing to the development of Alaska Native language schools and programs. This would be similar to the early development and teacher training programs at Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani. An additional step that would open the door for these programs would be the development of the Alaska Native Language Schools Consortium, which would serve as a statewide school district that allows for dedicated resources and efforts while offering protections from current K-12 educational structures that do not allow room for Alaska Native languages as equitable parts of curriculum and offerings.

There must be a critical mass of Alaska Native faculty who are fluent, hold a Ph.D., and are committed to program development at the level needed in order to construct the university within the university models seen in Hawai‘i and New Zealand. Similar to the language school efforts, this would involve building a network of colleagues who can advise and work collaboratively to strengthen the independence and capabilities of Indigenous programs within state higher education institutions.

Lingít’aaní Káa Yaa Sanas.áx̣ · An Alaska Native Language Media Network	
GOAL:	Create new domains & registers while normalizing and promoting Alaska Native languages through modern media.
OPERATING PHILOSOPHY:	Lingít’aaní káa haa léelk’w hás yoo x̣’atángi yaa nas.áx̣. The language of our grandparents is sounding off around the world.
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:	Locate funding and build the expertise to create content in print, web, radio, and television.

In order to normalize the language and create more opportunities for music, news, and film produced using Alaska Native languages, a media network should be created across Alaska. Tlingit is one of twenty Indigenous languages in Alaska, which might be seen as disadvantageous, but Alaska Natives are 15% of the population,<sup>28</sup> which gives them strength in numbers. If an Alaska Native Media Network was created that privileged Alaska Native languages and pushed for developing content using

<sup>28</sup> Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. *Alaska Population Overview: 2013 Estimates*. State of Alaska, 2015.

those languages, then the technological abilities to do so would rise across the state. The result would be new domains for Alaska Native languages and more of a presence by producing commercials and content that could be broadcast on mainstream media. In Hawai'i, 'Ōiwi TV helped create a voice for the Hawaiian language movement, opening the door for news and other programming in the Hawaiian language.

This concept could catch on in Alaska and—using on-demand technology—most communities would gain access to more language that is being used in modern and historical ways. Endangered languages want to be able to talk about things that are happening today and are most relevant to its youth. Sports, music, movies, weather, national and international events should all be topics that are regularly engaged in so the language can be the language of choice in any situation. Tlingit language learners are often able to tell memorized stories and histories, but unable to talk about something that happened to them recently. A media movement that accompanies control of education at all levels would make sure that our languages are not frozen in any particular moments in time, and are able to talk about a diverse array of topics without losing connections to the past or links to the Tlingit thought world.

In order to develop this, statewide organizers would have to develop strategies in order to launch and implement a statewide media network. Some of the framework already exists with Alaska Native people working in public radio, television, film, music, and creative writing. There are multiple areas that require focus: the administrative side so that an organizational structure can be developed and funding pursued; the technological side so that media can be gathered, developed, organized and placed online in way that makes content easy to find; the creative side so new content can be developed at a pace that meets the appetite of the language communities; and the language side so there are enough competent speakers to host discussions on a wide variety of topics.

Aadé Koon Dultóowu Yé – A Tlingit Philosophy of Education	
GOAL:	Develop a published philosophy of the Tlingit Language Movement.
OPERATING PHILOSOPHY:	Ax x'agáaxi áwé yéi kgwatée: ch'u tleix, kugaagastee Lingít. My prayer is going to be this: Let Tlingit exist forever.
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:	Work with elders, teachers, program developers, second language speakers, and recorded Tlingit speakers to document how Tlingit people learn and how we should teach and live from birth to death in our language.

All of these activities would be directed by a Philosophy of Tlingit Education, a document similar to the Kumu Honua Mauli Ola.<sup>29</sup> The development and maintenance of this document will be key to the Tlingit Language Movement, because it would ensure current fluent elders and advanced second language learners approve of the directions and activities of the movement. Having consensus on how and why to teach through the Tlingit language would help the Tlingit Language Movement deflect criticism and also prevent members from using personal agendas to drive their actions. It would keep members and organizations grounded by having a unifying mission. Fragmentation could result in language death, so efforts must be raised to foster unity, selflessness, courage, and determination. Having clear marching orders from our current elders, and from those who have had their messages previously recorded, would be the rudder to the canoe.

All of these things combined could turn the corner for the Tlingit language. It feels like the language is nearing the shores of a place and era where more speakers will be gained than lost, which is reversing language shift. The key components to driving this movement will be staying organized and unified, taking control of education, developing a media presence, and making sure all movements are guided by unifying philosophies. We have been told, in many different ways, that nothing measures up to our language and it should exist forever. With those thoughts in mind, we push on and elevate our language for our future grandchildren. This is the responsibility we have inherited, and this is what we are capable and determined to do.

<sup>29</sup> Kuleana Kope. *Kumu Honua Mauli Ola*. Hilo: 'Aha Pūnana Leo, Inc. and Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani, 2009.



## Conclusion: The Future of the Tlingit Language

Aadóoch Sá Haa Dachxánx'i Yán Has Du Ée Guxlatóow Haa Yoo X'atángi?

*Who Is Going to Teach Our Language To Our Grandchildren?*

X'úx' káx' áwé yéi s aya.óo  
yáa yeedát  
yáax'  
yáax'  
haa tóot has kóowatini aa  
aaa.  
Haa Lingíx sateeyí áwé  
kaax yéi shukgwashxéen  
a kusteeyí.

Dei haa jeex' áwé  
a káa yáa haa jinalsáḵ  
yáat  
haa Lingítx sateeyí.  
Naaléi áwé aadéi yéi  
aa kandutax'w yé haa jináḵ.  
Áwé a shú áwé tulashát  
áwé yáa yeedát áwé tlaḵ  
ax toowóo  
sh kax' x'awdigáx'  
yá Sealaska-ch a daa wdahaaní.  
Aan át haa x'awdagáax'in  
yáx  
haa léelk'w hás

They have written some into books  
already  
here  
here  
those who have joined with us,  
yes.  
For those of us who are Tlingit,  
the cover will slide off  
from our culture.

Even now our grip  
is weary from holding on to it,  
here,  
on to our Tlingit identity.  
It is very deep to where  
most of it has sunk from our grip.  
We are just clutching the very tip  
but this moment though, how  
my silent  
prayer continues  
that Sealaska would rise to it.  
It was as if  
we went and begged to have someone do it  
the way our grandparents

aadéi yéi s jinéiyi yé.	used to do things.
Át axwdishée haa Aankáawoo	My hope is that our Lord
has du éet wudasheeyí	will assist them
has du jín kée awulsháadi.	and lift their hands.
Aagáa tlél kut kei kagwaxeex haa Lingít̓x sateeyí.	Then, our Tlingit identity will not vanish.
L yéi yei s jeenaneinín ku.aa áwé	But if they don't do this
x'úx' áwé at has akawatée	they will only be carrying books around with them
a kaadáx áwé a akwatóow.	that they can read this from.
Dei ch'áakw áwé wduwatík'	Our Tlingit identity
haa Dleit Káax sateeyí yá haa xoonx'ich	has long been misunderstood
haa Lingít̓x sateeyí;	by our relatives who are white.
á áwé a kaadéi s akwalgéen.	This is what they will be looking at.
Áwé ch'u l yéi unaneiji áwé.	This is to prevent this from happening,
Aaa,	yes.
gunalchéesh xá	Thank you,
aaa,	yes,
adaanáx has wudanaagí	for rising
yá ksustí yá haa Lingít̓x sateeyí.	to this culture, to this Tlingit identity.
– Kichnáalx	– George Davis, Deisheetaan <sup>1</sup>

## 7.1 Pulling the Pieces Together

There is a Raven story within the Yéil Kutláakw (Raven Cycles) that is often called «Yéil ka Kudatán Kahídi» (Raven and the Salmon Box). In this story, all of the fish in the world are inaccessible. They are way out at sea, and only the rich people have boats large enough to make it out there and enjoy the richness of the sea. Tlingit people are salmon people, so there is something very important in this story. The Tlingit people are often referred to as «k'anashgidéi ku.oo» which translates to “poor people.” But this is not always a poverty that is seen in a negative light as it would be in modern capitalist America. It has more to do with humility, with being tied to a concept that sharing everything you have is the key to a type of richness that stretches out beyond the material.

One version of this story, as told by Yakw̓xwaan Tláa Katherine Mills (T'ak̓deintaan · Xunaa Káawu), begins like this: <sup>2</sup>

Tleidahéen áwé yú Yéil –	At one time that Raven –
xáat áwé tlél káa x'axáni yéi uteexín, ch'áakw.	there were no salmon for people to eat, long ago.

<sup>1</sup> Davis, George, in *Haa Tuwunáagu Yís*, Ed. Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, 312–313.

<sup>2</sup> Mills, Yakw̓xwaan Tláa Katherine. “Yéil ka Kudatán Kahídi: Raven and the Salmon Box.” *Neech̓x Yaa Nagút Yéil: Raven Is Walking Along the Beach (Raven Stories)*. Unpublished Manuscript. Juneau: Sealaska Heritage Institute.



Áwé	So
yú Yéilch a daa yoo tutángi nooch.	that Raven keeps thinking about it.
Ch'as yú deikéex' áwé isxítt'	They only spawn out in the ocean,
yá xáat.	the salmon.
Áwé a daa yoo tuwatánk yú Yéil.	That's what that Raven's thinking about.
K'anashgidéi ku.oo yá haa yáx,	There was no way poor people like us
áwé tlél aadé has du kagéi aa kgwaaháayi yé.	could ever have any.

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Raven ends up trading for a magical tool called «Náakw Tl'eigi Wootsaagáyi» (Octopus Tentacle Cane), which he uses to reach way out and hook the house that was floating at sea. He tries to pull the house ashore, but cannot. His feet dig so deep into the sandy beaches that you can still see the footprints there today. This all happened at the Aalséix (Alsek River), which is located in Gunaxoo (Dry Bay). He had to sing a spirit song called «X'anaxgaatwaayáa,» which is the name of the man who owned «Náakw Tl'eigi Wootsaagáyi». With the power of this song, he pulled the house ashore and released the fish, and tied the rivers into knots so they would always be there.

This story is shared briefly here to show how we can lean upon the cultural teachings and ways of knowing that have been given to us by the elders who were documented over the years. We are digging our feet down into the footprints of Raven, the Ancient Ones, our Ancestors, and our Future generations. This document has moved through a number of interlocking pieces that—when combined—assist us with mapping the future of the Tlingit language. This wonderful thing that was born on this world. This thing that saved them, heals us, and is the only direct link between the future, present, and past. When we give ourselves over to it we see beyond the rigid oppositional binaries and fragmented senses of time, place, people, and reasons for being that the colonial world has attempted to trap us inside of a Box of Darkness.

We turn to another section in the Raven Cycles—Yéil Kutláakw. This one is by Hoonah elder and master storyteller Kaasgéiy Susie James (Choonasháa · Xúnaa Káawu):<sup>3</sup>

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3 James, Kaasgéiy Susie. "Yéil ka Kee.á: Raven and Daylight." *Neechx Yaa Nagút Yéil: Raven Is Walking Along the Beach (Raven Stories)*. Unpublished Manuscript. Juneau: Sealaska Heritage Institute.

Kawjígít.	It was dark.
Héi-ei-ei! Ha ha ha ha ha ha hé'!	He-e-ey! Ha ha ha ha ha ha hey!
Héen x̱ukaadé áwé ḵaa ṽayík duwa.áx̱ch.	People's voices could be heard on the water.
Héi-ei-ei! Ho ho ho ho ho ho!	He-e-ey! Ho ho ho ho ho ho!
Héi-ei-ei! Ho ho ho ho ho!	He-e-ey! Ho ho ho ho ho!
« Ax̱ x̱'éit aṽwóo! »	"Send it my way so I can eat!"
aadé éex' wé ḵaa t'áak.	he yelled to the people on the other side.
« Ax̱ x̱'éit aṽwóo!	"Give me some to eat!"
Daa sá yéi daṽné,	Whatever you're working on,
ax̱ x̱'éit aṽwóo! »	send it my way so I can eat!"
L ḵ'adaat <sup>63</sup> ḵaa tooshtí. Hé'.	They didn't pay attention to anything he said. Gosh.
Ḵaa ṽayík duwa.áx̱ch,	You could hear their voices
wé héen x̱ukaadé.	from across the water.
« Yee ḵaa Ḵee.á ṉkwaak'oots! Ax̱ x̱'éit aṽwóo! »	"I might break Daylight over you! Give me something to eat!"
« Hé hé héi-ei-ei!	"He he he-e-ey!"
Naas Shagiṽát,	Head of Nass Child
Ḵee.á Daakeit anga.oo. »	might have the Box of Daylight."

From these words we have to realize that the Box of Daylight has already been opened for us. Within the language there are keys to understanding its importance, and through its use and our efforts to re-establish it as the language of power we will empower the language to heal and unite the Tlingit people and those who live on our ancestral home in a way that is neither colonial nor tourist.

To summarize the intentions of these chapters, "1: The State of the Tlingit Language" gives a detailed overview of the current state of the Tlingit language. "2: Oppression and Cultural Genocide Among the Tlingit" outlines some of the many things that have happened that contribute to a near-death state of Tlingit. "3: Increasing Adult Fluency in the Tlingit Language" posits theories on how to achieve higher levels of fluency in Tlingit at a fast rate, and to encourage people to speak. "4: Creating Safe Acquisition Environments" focuses on the need to create safe spaces to learn and use the Tlingit language in order to increase the Willingness to Communicate. "5: Mending a People and Their Language" looks at the current state of dissonance and alienation between the Tlingit people and their language and steps that can be taken in order to make the language and people united again. "6: A 30 Year Language Plan for Tlingit" proposes activities that maximize the possibility that the language

achieves stability and intergenerational transmission. These concepts are bound together, and collectively address a plan that dramatically increase the number of speakers of Tlingit and the social and physical spaces where the language has primacy and power.

One day I was sitting with my eldest daughter and trying to explain through the Tlingit language the ways that people have treated us in our own land. I do not speak to my children in English, so I told her about the signs people used to put up in businesses that said “no Indians or dogs allowed” and how civil rights leaders like Ḵaax̱gal.aat Elizabeth Peratrovich, Lk'uteen Roy Peratrovich, and Shgúndi William Paul fought against systemic racism. I did my best to translate the concepts, and said: «hél has du tuwáa ushgoowún uháan. Hél has du tuwáa ushgoowún haa yoo x'atángi. Ách áwé wé t'aa káa has akaashixít <hél neil yigoodíł wé Lingít ła keitl>» which would translate to “they didn’t want us. they didn’t want our language. because of that they wrote on boards, ‘don’t come in here, Tlingit peoples and dogs.’” Her face wrinkled in disgust, and she exclaimed in English: “Well, I’m going to put up signs that say, ‘no English!’”

I think of my children when I work on these things. I think of the elders who taught me, starting with my grandfather Gooshdehéen Si Dennis Sr, who laughed at me when I tried to say «éil’» (salt) in 1995 when I asked him to teach me the language. I think of the students of Tlingit now, and how much courage they show in their various resistances to oppression and racism. There was a moment in the early summer of 2016 in Hilo, Hawai’i, while we were working on our last semester. One of my dear friends and colleagues, Kī’ope Raymond, invited me to the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo graduation. I said it sounded wonderful, and I wanted to go. For some reason I thought it might be a small informal gathering. We showed up and there was a large tent to provide shade, and maybe a hundred and fifty people gathered to watch four and five year olds age out of the language nest. Most of them would cross the street the next fall and attend Ke Kula ‘o Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u (Nāwahī Hawaiian Language Medium School) as kindergarteners.

My role was a witness. As I saw the band playing and the proud parents, family, and friends preparing for things to start, I began to have a feeling that things might be emotional. I was preparing myself for a good cry. In 2014 my father died suddenly of heart failure. A couple days after his funeral

I received a call from my mother letting me know she had cancer. It turned out to be terminal. Then in the cold February of 2016 my step-mother passed away suddenly from cancer. She was my mother's older sister and was the one raised me. At that moment, while watching this wonderful graduation ceremony, my mother was beginning her steady decline and I was hoping I would make it through the days and return to her and to my family. All these things were making my life «x'óol' yáx yatee» which translates to "like a whirlpool" and is a metaphor for chaos, unpredictability.

I heard Kí'ope call my name: X̱une! I turned and looked at him. He was pointed to a long line of young parents and their children. The graduates. I looked back at Kí'ope and saw tears brimming his eyelids. We shared a moment. I felt the tears coming. He exclaimed, "intergenerational transmission!!" and walked away quickly. We were falling apart. It was becoming more and more clear to me that what I was seeing was a miracle. Sometime in Hawai'i I went with my wife and our children to 'Akaka falls. I read about a fish called 'o'opu alamo'o, which climbs 442 feet to the top of the falls in order to spawn.<sup>4</sup> I thought about this well, and how we might dream the impossible dream. The pieces were all around us. We just needed priority shift. "Let the children be the yeast," is how Larry Kimura kept telling it to us.

The graduation ceremony started. The children entered on the stage, wearing their uniforms. They sat down and the lead teacher began her speech. She did not talk for too long before she was crying with joy and pride. Pila had done an amazing job teaching us basic Hawaiian at a very fast pace, as Teho, tinakpáhngé, and I spent 9–10 hours per day for almost three weeks learning all we could and challenging ourselves to achieve some basic proficiencies in their beautiful Hawaiian language. I could only catch bits and pieces of what the teacher was saying, but I could feel the impact of it. This is what it felt like to live in a language that was experiencing uplift after being endangered.

The long line of families then began their part. There were perhaps thirty of them lined up, and the process was their graduating child would make a speech and the parents would respond. All of this was in Hawaiian, and some of the children were crying as they spoke. I was floored. This is what I wanted for all of our children back home, and for our families. The amazement was overwhelming,

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4 Mack, Eric. "Where badass fish climb rock cliffs... with their mouths." *CNET*. 25 Feb 2014. Accessed from <https://www.cnet.com/news/where-badass-fish-climb-rock-cliffs-with-their-mouths/>

and afterwards I was told to go through a building and load up a plate of food. Kí'ope came back and apologized for breaking down in front of me. I told him it was understandable. It was incredible. I had never seen anything like it. He wiped his eyes again. Then he told me, in a voice that shook with love and power. He told me this: those families that you saw over there. Those babies. Their parents. Their parents were my babies when I first started teaching.

That was it. I was done. It was time to give myself to the cause, even more than before. The last semester in the program went faster than the others. I would call my mother and walk her through the processes that I understood and had been taught about death. All of these cycles of life and struggle. They were swirling inside of me and I kept thinking of a phrase shared by K̄aaklige Norman James. We were going over some grammatical concepts. They were all inside of him as naturalized concepts, but when he heard the explanations as we worked on the language as birth speakers of colonizing English he laughed and shouted «ch'u uwayáa ax̄ tundatáani kamdlíxís' a geiwú tin» which he then translated for us: it's as if my mind got tangled up in a seine net.

But the visions were clear to me. If we could get our children to speak without hesitation then we might see in them an absence of historical trauma and soul wounds. Maybe there was a reality coming where the connections were stronger and we were less likely to hurt one another. Maybe I was in a state of being where it did not all make sense, but it felt right. The people back home who said hurtful things about me in public: he makes mistakes, they only teach college Tlingit, they are changing the language, he is not one of us. Those things were subsiding in some ways.

The last time I was in Hawai'i, I had a bit of extra time before the plane left to take me back home to all my babies: wife Miriah and children Kiana, Ava, and K̄ájaa. The night before, we had a party where speeches were made and they put beautiful and bountiful leis around those of us who were outsiders to their program. We felt the love they had for us, and the generosity they shared by opening the doors to their program to us. The day after the party I packed all my thing, said goodbye to Larry, tinakpáhngé, and Teho. I drove across the island and parked at a beach. I walked into the waters before heading home. I prayed for my mother. I had been singing her songs and saying prayers for her. I had been on the phone with my sisters who were there with her. I felt awful for not being there, but at the

same time I could not be there. I cannot explain it.

The plane left that night. I landed in Seattle and caught my connecting flight to Juneau. It took me through the night. I would call my mother every day and talk to her. Towards the end she was barely conscious. I would sing to her and speak Tlingit. I would tell her what she would see as she crossed over. The last time I talked to her she could barely speak. But when she heard my voices she was suddenly clear. She said, "Lance. Son. I love you." We landed in Juneau in the morning, and as the plane rumbled along the jetway I turned my phone on. The instant it grabbed a signal, it was ringing. It was my sister. I knew.

I believe in the strength of our language. The words of the old people stay with me, and rise up at the right time. Since leaving Hawai'i my family suffered through the death of my younger brother. I have watched some of my closest and most beloved elders pass away, and my work has taken a severe blow. Yet there is real hope. The work presented here is offered as thoughts and suggestions, and not as hard truths that people have to accept. But when we are in the act of speaking and learning, when we make a place for our language, when we hear children understanding and learning our language, and when the advocates of our languages are making monumental changes in policy and planning, then I know that the rivers are still running with salmon and the daylight breaks upon us day after day.

This work is dedicated to the memory of my parents, and is made possible by the love and dedication of my wife. Many people stepped forward to help us heal and make it through the many journeys, and because of that this work belongs to the people who work for Lingít, who work for Indigenous languages, and who refuse to see a world that still genocides in self-justifying silence. The children shall be the yeast, and the ones who work together with love and kindness will usher in an era of ongoing change. We build upon the work of so many kind and genuine geniuses, and strive for the day when our babies are lined up as fluent speakers, graduating their children in a ceremony that counters all of that suffering and loss. I am grateful eternally for the people of the 'Aha Pūnana Leo movement. You are shaping worlds beyond the ones you might know, and have given me strength and hope when I needed it most.

Sometimes I wish my teachers and elders were all here to see this, so I could show them that I

listened and did my best. But I know they are with me, looking over my shoulder and forgiving the many mistakes I have made along the way.

## 7.2 Visualizing a Living and Healthy Language

In order to bring visions of decolonization and language health into a reality, significant social changes must occur among the Tlingit people. Several years ago, Gwich'in elder Randall Tetlichí visited an Intermediate Tlingit class. At one point he shared a vision with us that is paraphrased here:

It must be very scary for you to see your old people going. Sometimes we worry that all their knowledge is going to die with them. But it goes back in the land. When you go out and speak your language on the land, the knowledge comes back to you in your dreams.<sup>5</sup>

This relates to another important concept that Keihéenák'w John Martin shared when asked to give inspiration to a new generation of learners. «Yan has awsinéi áx yaa gaxtoo.át yé,» which translates to “they have already prepared the path for us.”<sup>6</sup> When envisioning a time when there are thousands of speakers of Tlingit, and children are speaking the language, then sometimes we have to get out of our own way. There might be an instinct to be contrary. There might be doubt and hesitation. There might be a lingering feeling that we are doing the wrong thing. But as Kaal.átk' Charlie Joseph stated: “Ách áyá yáa yeedát s du wakshiyeex tulayéxx,» which translates to, “That is why now we made these songs their vision.”<sup>7</sup>

The idea here is to find a way to create opportunities for stillness at times, and to listen to the ways that wisdom sounds off on our land. Kingeistí David Katzeek shares an idea of this. During several class visits he would say: «At wuskú kei nas.áx Lingít Aaní káa» (wisdom is sounding off across Tlingit land). He would say that you could hear it in the running streams, and when the wind blows through the leaves of trees or needles of the evergreens. Some of these concepts might seem like they are too mythical to be part of the process, but this is the ways that ancestors communicate with current generations: through what a colonized mind would consider universal. The wind that blows through these trees is the same wind that blows through a tree anywhere, and the river that runs is

5 Tetlichí, Randall. Intermediate Tlingit Class Visit, November 2012.

6 Martin, John Keihéenák'w. “Keihéenák'w — Haa Léelk'u Has Du Yoo X'atángi (Tlingit Language).”

7 Joseph, Charlie, in *Haa Twunáagu Yís*, 266–267



part of a geologic process that we can observe and predict. That is not to say that Tlingit people and the language is opposed to acquiring skills and knowledge and applying them in other places. One of the core concepts here is this: when you achieve a sense of stillness that affords you the time to listen, then the path will become more clear.

When I stop long enough, I think of extensive conversations in Tlingit about a great many topics without stopping to offer corrections in English. I think of children playing on the land using the language that was born here and should live forever. I can envision a time when languages are flowing in meeting rooms of our organizations, and the placenames on our land are being used by locals, guests, visitors, and even by those who are far away and talking about the land of our ancestors. In order to achieve a vision, it must become more clear in the individual mind and the collective consciousness. There must be a sense of cohesion that allows the group to move towards a place of greater individual fluency and collective use and strength. There must also be enough diversified leadership and activities that cells of language reclamation are in motion at all times. Language learners and teachers can push the boundaries of what is known, learned, taught, and used without having to remain stagnant in exercises of colors, numbers, nouns, and basic phrases.

We might say «kínde shaksitán wé shaa» (the mountain is steep), but the stories show us over and over how to work together and succeed with respect, love, and kindness. The speeches of our ancestors and old people give us the strength that we need, and when we are living with our languages then we are keeping them among us, interlocked in place with the language that bound it all together, here, in the places of Ravens and Eagles, Wolves and Crows.

The vision presented here is done so with the utmost respect of those who left us a message. It attempts to shine a light on the path that they talk about being made for us, and outlines steps that would create more speakers and places where the language is spoken. Collectively, when this vision is adopted and executed, as the product of a group determined to thrive, then the narrative will shift from one of decline to one of rising power.

### **7.3 Unity Above All Else**



The ideas and activities of the Tlingit Continuity Movement should be carried out without strong attachment to ownership and accolades. It should actually be difficult to figure out who is actually in charge, because the language belongs to everyone: past, present, and future. Sometimes if one person elevates to a position of leadership and influence, then they become a target of frustrations and anger. There could also be personality conflicts or personal agendas that lead to resistance to ideas instead of giving them equal consideration.

Everyone does not have to think the same. Disagreements are okay. But what the group needs to be aware of is the power that fragmentation brings in terms of keeping things in a state of slow and steady language loss. Being a group and believing in the group is one of the most challenging aspects of language revitalization work. Individuals must maintain high levels of awareness and humility in order to self-monitor and keep their focus on the larger goals instead of personal motivations. Groups must work collaboratively to help the individuals with these tasks and determine the best ways to mend fractures when possible.

#### **7.4 Maintaining a Path of Resilience and Strength**

All effective language revitalization movements around the world have found ways to maintain a critical mass of laborers in the fight against genocide. Everyone working in endangered languages should keep in mind that the number of people who do the actual work is often very small until the reversal of language shift can finally be initiated. The vast majority of people will likely show interest, but will fall out of the movement before achieving fluency and will also likely struggle to make Tlingit the language of power and regular use. That will change over time with the right steps and with the actualization of cultural value shift, but in the meantime the core language team must be careful to not tear each other apart or walk away out of frustration or self-preservation.

Language communities will see their share of abusive behavior, whether that be sex abuse, verbal abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, self-harm, addictions, and other forms of internalized violence. Language movements need to have the right level of awareness among a core group of planners in order to figure out the culturally appropriate methods of creating and maintaining safe spaces. This

might include meetings with people who are causing harm or disruption. It could also involve talking to members of romantic interests that have failed and trying to keep all parties in the movement. Also, many communities and organizations fail to take proper protective action against sexual predators who create unsafe environments by exploiting the power structures between males and females, or between adults and children.

Sometimes when languages are endangered and the very act of language revitalization is a fight against colonial genocide, a spark can go nuclear in a hurry. In addition, people can get weary and can walk away because there are easier things to do that have less of a burden. Language revitalization movements need a core of people who can work in these environments in productive ways that avoid fighting fire with fire or taking sides, but instead commits to working together to ensure that the language movement is larger than individuals, groups, and social dynamics.

### **7.5 Crossing Borders and Geographies**

The ancestral territory of the Tlingit people should be undivided. Long before territorial and national colonial borders appeared between us, Tlingit people were united by language, waterways, migration routes, trade routes, and histories that stretch back for tens of thousands of years. One of the more pervasive and perverse colonial tactics is to present the world as incredibly finite and limited. If only there was more time, money, and energy. If only we had tried all of this earlier. If only, if only, if only. The reality is that through colonial languages and ways of knowing, the world is tremendously finite and limited, but that is a reality that Indigenous language advocates can reject.

In a similar fashion, the distorting lenses of colonialism leads one to believe that Indigenous pre-contact America was a series of war zones where chaos ruled. There was tremendous tension between clans, between Tribes, and between houses even. While that may be true, the interconnection and intercourse of goods, services, peoples, and ideas is often overlooked, resulting in distorted concepts of collaboration and sharing of resources. The result today is ideas that someone who speaks one dialect should not be teaching those who speak another, or that the differences between coastal (Alaskan) and inland (Canadian) Tlingit peoples are so great that they need their separate programs, writing

systems, curricula, and language planning efforts.

Limitations in time and money mean that communities and organizations are competing for human resources, curricula, grant applications, and more. But that which makes us Tlingit—haa yoo x'atángi (the language) and haa kusteeyí (ways of living) should be seen as the power that unites us. Dialects are areas of exploration for the older speakers of Tlingit who remember a time when the dialects were all much stronger. A single writing system is beneficial to all because it reduces duplication of effort and materials. Borders should be challenged as colonial mechanisms that create artificial boundaries across Indigenous territory. The Tlingit Continuity Language Movement can surpass these conceived limitations, and should practice doing so with activities and political moves that ease border crossings and encourage large language gatherings across Tlingit territory.

## 7.6 Tlingit Forever

In 2013, Kaalkáawu Cyril George agreed to be filmed telling stories in Tlingit, thanks to the assistance and kindness of Shteiwteen Kathy Ruddy. He was 91 years old at the time, and had visited a number of my classes. He had lost his hearing, but Kaagwáask' Ishmael Hope and I would make suggestions or requests to Kathy, and she would write them down for him. I remember from those sessions how much he loved his grandchildren, both those who were his lineal descendants and those who became his grandchildren because of their dedication to the Tlingit language. He made several statements that should become law in the field of Tlingit language revitalization.

For example, when Kaagwáask' Ishmael Hope asked what the students of Tlingit needed to hear, Cyril's response was spectacular. Here are the closing lines from his response, which was translated with assistance from Guneiwtí Marsha Hotch and Gunaak'w Fred White:

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Yee a xoo aa axwalgéini ...  
 a kayáade yaa nay.át  
 yee léelk'u hás kusteeyí.  
 Wáa yateeyi yéix' sáyá xat tutí nooch, hóochk'.  
 Haa jeedáx guxlaháash:  
 haa kusteeyí.  
 Yee yáx áwé xwalgéini.  
 Ax dachxánx'i yán, ax yátx'i.

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When I am looking among some of you all ...  
 you are all walking towards it,  
 your ancestors' way of life.  
 Sometimes I feel like there is no hope.  
 It is going to drift out of our hands:  
 our way of life.  
 I looked upon your faces.  
 My grandchildren, my children.

Yeedát áwé ax toowú yéi yatee,  
 téil a sé, kei gaxtugéex':  
 haa kusteeyí.  
 Gunalchéesh,  
 yee ee at latóowu áx'.  
 Xát tsú,  
 a xoo aa, tél Lingít kusti.  
 Has du tuwáax' kwá sigóo,  
 yee ee has altóowu.  
 Ax x'agáaxi áwé yéi kgwatée:  
 ch'u tleix,  
 kugaagastee:  
 Lingít.

Now, that is, this is how I am feeling,  
 without a voice, we going to throw it out:  
 our way of life.  
 Thank you,  
 for learning it there.  
 Me too,  
 some of them, they might not be Tlingit.  
 They want, however,  
 that they would teach you.  
 My prayer is going to be this:  
 forever,  
 let it exist:  
 Tlingit.<sup>8</sup>

What the page fails to show is his sheer determination to make this happen. If you watch the recording, you can see him as he winds his thoughts up to the final line. He has a watch on, and bracelets on his wrists. When he reaches the end of his thoughts, a prayer, he clenches his fists before speaking the last three lines. I remember being there. I remember the power of what he said, in terms of the emotion he put into his words and also the ways that he put them together. It brought me back to Raven. The stories. Always Raven.

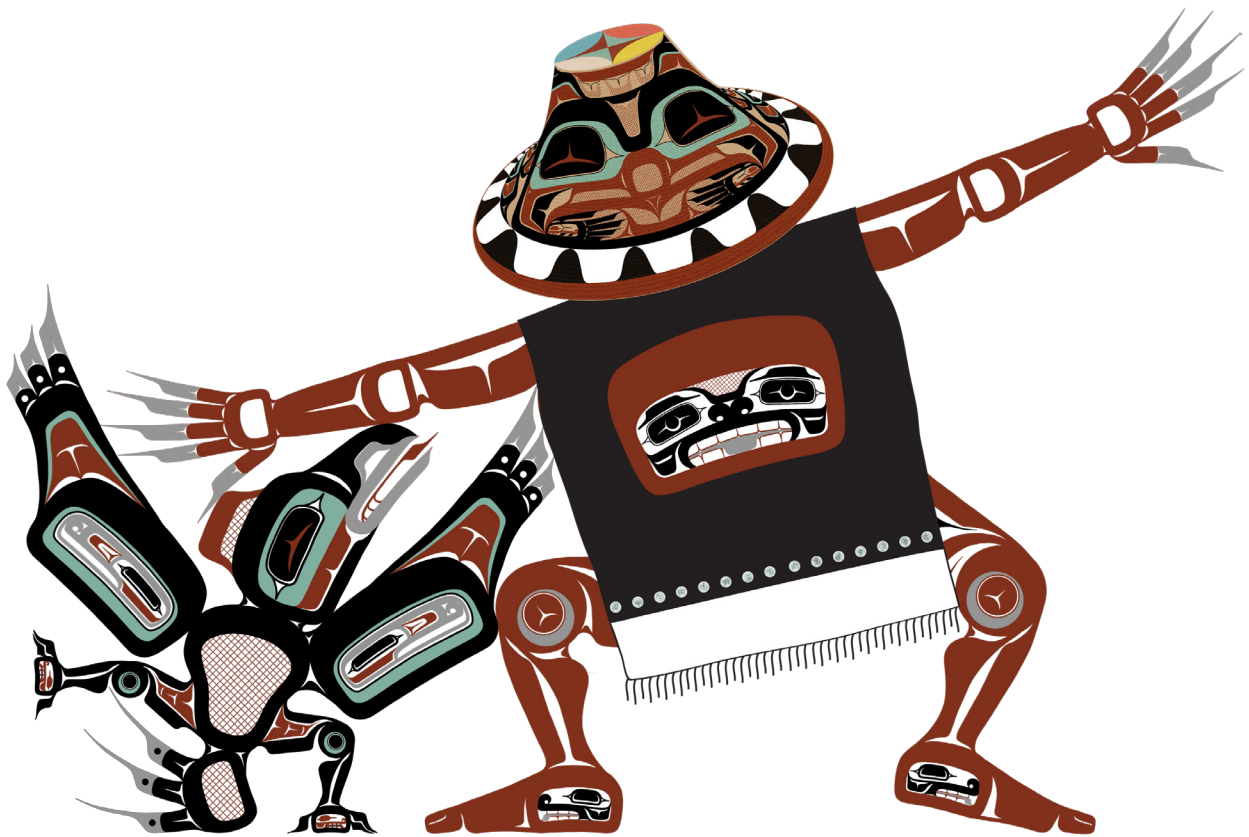
In the Raven stories, when he really wants something to happen, he uses a hortative verb mode, which translates to “let it happen,” and then he ends up talking it into reality. For example, when he is hanging above the world after a great flood and begins to sing his prayer song: Kájaa kwshé kát xat gaagasgeet (let me fall on a kelp island). And then it happens. It appears. Things fall into place.

The comfort is knowing that these things have worked before. The danger is in assuming that because you have said the words, or that someone has said the words, that it will happen on its own. Instead it will take tremendous effort. The language can only be gained and brought back through hard work and a commitment to keep trying and keep supporting and keep believing. The ideas proposed here are but a framework, not a prescription, on ways to pull the kelp islands together and make it into a canoe that can carry us towards a fine sand, towards a shore where our language is no longer endangered, and we are at long last gaining more than we are losing.

8 George, Cyril. “Kaalk.awu X'éidax Ling.t Yoo X'atangi Daat (Tlingit Language).” trans. Lance Twitchell. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DP2EVbtUrc>.

Gunálchéesh áwé yáat'aa yitóowu. Yee gu.aa yáḡ x'wán, ldakát yeewháan. Ch'a yaadachóonde gaḡtoo.áat. Ḳusaxán tin yagaḡtoodláak. Tlaḡ wáa sá aḡ toowú yak'ei haa yoo ḡ'atángi daat yánde kgeeháani. Yak'ei. Yak'ei. Haa yoo ḡ'atángi tin has du ítḡ yaa ntu.át yeedát. Hás áwé, haa dachxánx'i yán, hél aadáḡ ayakagaḡtooléet. Tléik'. Has du ya.áak áwé . Aaa. Haa yoo ḡ'atángi daat haa yawsiták. Yéi áwé haa shukaawajáa. Ldakát yeewháan. Yan gé yee wunei? Yánde yaa yantoodlák. Yánde yaa yantoodlák. Tsaatguyéigaa haa wdidóok. Áwé. Woosh jín tulshát yeisú. Woosh jín tulshát yeisú.

Gunálchéesh.



# Glossary of Terms

## Sociolinguistic Terminology

In order to assist with the discussion of overcoming the external and internalized modes of oppression in language revitalization, the following terms have been utilized. These definitions are adapted from Prilleltensky and Laurier, with additional source material noted where relevant.

**battered person syndrome:** The medical and psychological condition of a person who has suffered (usually persistent) emotional, physical, or sexual abuse from another person. Also called battered child syndrome or battered woman syndrome depending on the circumstances. In the case of a woman, her husband or partner inflicts the injuries.

**cultural hegemony:** Italian Marxist scholar Antonio Gramsci adopted this term (possibly as a codeword for ideology) in his prison notebooks to theorize what is known today as ‘soft’ power, that is to say power that maintains its authority without the need for violent coercion. Hegemony is not something governments can achieve on their own; they require the active complicity of the population they administer. As is obvious, revolution is impossible, or at least highly unlikely under such conditions, and that is what concerned Gramsci. He realized, too, that culture is in this respect a more potent political tool than mere force of arms. For Gramsci the clearest sign of this is the willingness of a population to not only tolerate dreadful living and working conditions, but to die to preserve them too. Benedict Anderson’s work on

the imagined community demonstrates how the concept of nation functions in a hegemonic manner to create a sense of bonded coherence amongst a large group of people who could not possibly know each other.

**domains:** In sociolinguistics, refers to a group of institutionalized social situations typically constrained by a common set of behavioral rules, e.g. the domain of the family is the house, of religion is the church, etc. The notion is seen as of particular importance in the analysis of multilingual settings involving several participants, where it is used to relate variations in the individuals' choice and topic of language to broader sociocultural norms and expectations of interaction.

**internalization of hegemonic self-rejecting views:** the process by which individuals or groups solidify internal oppression as a result of explicit verbal abuse and subtle stratagems such as negative expectations that become self-fulfilling prophecies.

**interpersonal oppression:** lateral oppression of those in close personal relationships that is achieved by mirroring the oppressor, assigning values of such as useless, inferior, incapable, lazy, unlovable, and/or stupid while actively denying access to love, caring, nurturing, friendships, support, compassion, ability to communicate, and/or the ability to leave.

**intrapersonal oppression:** a decreased perception of self-value that results in feeling useless, inferior, incapable, lazy, unlovable, and/or stupid while dealing with a perceived absence of love, care, nurturing, friendships, support, compassion, ability to communicate, and/or the ability to leave.

**lateral violence:** occurs within marginalized groups where members strike out at each other as a result of being oppressed. The oppressed become the oppressors of themselves and each other. Common behaviors that prevent positive change from occurring include gossiping, bullying, finger-pointing, backstabbing and shunning.

**learned helplessness:** the state of passivity developed in response to repeated experiences of failure that helps solidify apathy toward adverse living circumstances. Feelings of hopelessness are reinforced when people explain their misfortune in terms of personal inadequacies and regard their suffering as pervading their entire lives, both in the present and the future.

**legitimizing myths:** Attitudes, values, beliefs, or ideologies that provide moral and intellectual



support to and justification for the group-based hierarchical social structure and the unequal distribution of value in social systems.

**macro level language policy & planning:** Language policy and planning development and implementation at the level of governments and large-level administrations, in forms covert and overt, that determine the social norms for language use for individuals and groups in various domains.

**meso level language policy & planning:** Language policy and planning development and implementation at the level of institutions and smaller-level administrations, in forms covert and overt, that determine the social norms for language use for individuals and groups in various domains.

**micro level language policy & planning:** Language policy and planning development and implementation at the level of families, social groups, and individuals, in forms covert and overt, that determine the social norms for language use for individuals and groups in various domains. obedience to authority: A reluctance to resist or reject the authority of oppression, often maintained by legitimized myths of the oppressor's superiority and apathy fueled by hopelessness and perception of low personal and group value.

**pessimistic explanatory style:** A cognitive approach fostered by repeated instances of failure, which in turn, cyclically promote a learned helplessness response.

**political oppression:** The use of multiple forms of power by dominating agents to advance their own interests at the expense of persons or groups in positions of relative powerlessness through the creation of material, legal, military, economic, and/or other social barriers to the fulfillment of self-determination, distributive justice, and democratic participation.

**psychological oppression:** The internalized view of self as negative and as undeserving of resources or increased participation in societal affairs, resulting from the use of affective, behavioral, cognitive, linguistic, and cultural mechanisms designed to solidify political domination.

**surplus powerlessness:** Feelings of personal impotence beyond and above the actual limitations placed on the individual by the social context.

## **Language Revitalization Activities and Programs**

The terms used to describe activities and programs in the field of language revitalization may vary from place to place. In order to assist with planning and implementation, the following terms are used in this text and are recommended for language policy and planning.

**language maintenance:** Intended for languages that already have stable fluency levels and places where the language is spoken. Efforts undertaken are intended to prevent language shift and loss.

**language revitalization:** Intended for languages that have low fluency levels and few places where the language is spoken. The goal of planning is to increase the number of speakers and the number of places where the language is used.

**language revival:** is intended for languages that no longer have fluent speakers or have so few fluent speakers that the language has to be reconstructed in order to make it a language of use and power.

**language nests:** These are efforts to create a home environment where children are raised entirely in the Indigenous language. The most notable examples are the Te Kōhanga Reo among the Māori of New Zealand and the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo in Hawai‘i, which have resulted in the creation of birth speakers of languages that were once critically endangered and now count their speakers in tens of thousands.

**language medium schools:** These are K-12 schools designed for children and families already using the language upon enrollment. They utilize the Indigenous language as the medium of education (teaching through the language as opposed to learning the language) for all subjects including English as an additional language and teach Indigenous language arts rather than English language arts. They are administered and operated through the language and hold parent meetings through the language. They differ from a more standard immersion school model where the focus is on teaching the language to non-speakers and English is the language other than in the immersion classroom. A pioneering example of this is the Ke Kula ‘O Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u (Nāwahī for short), which has a strong history of protesting standardized testing, and has maintained a 100% graduation rate and 80% college placement

rate for the past 20 years.<sup>1</sup>

**adult immersion programs:** these are designed to create speakers out of adults who have some knowledge of the language and can commit to living in a language home for months to years at a time. The most successful example of this is the adult immersion program in the Mohawk language at Six Nations, which has created a new generation of language speakers and teachers and shifted their language program away from always translating to producing Indigenous language content.

**master-apprentice programs:** These are designed for languages with very few fluent speakers remaining, pairing them with intermediate-level speakers as employees whose job is to live with each other in the language while working. Successful examples come out of California, and were designed by emeritus UC Berkley linguist Leanne Hinton.

**language education programs:** These are education programs at various levels of education and in communities that are designed to create speakers through sequenced curriculum that teaches vocabulary and grammar through a variety of activities in and out of classrooms. This is the most common effort, and the successful programs can produce speakers who reach an intermediate-high level of understanding and speaking after two years.

**community education & awareness programs:** These are programs that exist at the community level as “language circles” and other gatherings that are often informal and unstructured. They are often less intimidating than highly-structured programs.

**language immersion schools and programs:** A language immersion school has two basic characteristics that differentiate it from most public schools in Alaska: use of the target language is a requirement (as is the limitation of use of English at times), and the language functions throughout the school curricula. An excellent example of this is the Ayaprun Elitnaurvik in Bethel, Alaska.<sup>2</sup> They may vary in terms of the amount of time targeted for immersion, as described below:

**Total Immersion:** This model was developed to teach a second language to majority ethnic group English-speakers. It is called “total” immersion because the non-English

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, William and Kaunoe Kamanā. “Insights from Indigenous Language Immersion in Hawai’i.” *Immersion Education : Practices, Policies, Possibilities*. Ed. Diane J. Tedick, Donna Christian and Tara Williams Fortune. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011, 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ayaprun Elitnaurvigmi*. Lower Kuskokwim School District. <http://ayaprun.lksd.org>

language is used 100% of the time in the earliest grades, i.e., kindergarten and first grade, and then is gradually replaced with the use of English in subsequent grades for teaching specific academic content areas until by the end of elementary school students are taught 50% through the non-English language and 50% through English. Total immersion programs seldom continue beyond elementary school. Total immersion therefore differs from language medium school where 100% of the non-English language is used at all grades and continues on through high school. Another difference is that a total immersion program is administered and operated through English while a language medium school is administered and operated through the non-English language.<sup>3</sup>

**bilingual schools:** The goal is to speak the target language 50% of the time. Steps are taken at times to prevent the use of English, but teachers, staff, students, and parents are encouraged but not required to use the target language. Teachers and staff take note of which language is being used and find ways to encourage more use of the target language.

**Culture-Based Education:** These programs often create an Indigenous cultural environment that contain important content and help prevent Indigenous students from being disoriented in Eurocentric institutions. As Bill Demmert, a national leader in education who was Tlingit and supported the development of Indigenous Language Medium schools, states:

The public school systems in each state may be defined as Generic (because they are designed to meet the academic needs of all students without regard to the racial or ethnic mix of students served by each local school. In many cases it may be appropriate to define the public schools as Culture Specific because many believe public schools reflect the cultural mores and priorities of middle class America. In either case the language of instruction is English with limited opportunity to learn one's heritage language or one's indigenous language if that language is other than English.<sup>4</sup>

Culture-based education often teach Indigenous languages similar to foreign language programs and are a small percentage of the overall curriculum of the institution.

Because of these restrictions, proficiency beyond recognition and use of memorized

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3 Fortune, Tara Williams. "What the Research Says About Immersion." Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA). *University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus*. Retrieved from [http://carla.umn.edu/immersion/documents/ImmersionResearch\\_TaraFortune.html](http://carla.umn.edu/immersion/documents/ImmersionResearch_TaraFortune.html)

4 Demmert, William G. "What is Culture-Based Education? Understanding Pedagogy and Curriculum." *Honoring Our Heritage: Culturally Appropriate Approaches for Teaching Indigenous Students*. Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University, 2011. Retrieved from <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/jar/HOH/HOH-1.pdf>

words and phrases is rarely achieved. Developing immersion programs is difficult for highly endangered languages, but Culture Based Education (CBE) programs should not be confused for language immersion programs. When the term “immersion” is used to refer to these programs, it creates a false belief that students are functioning in an environment where the non-English language exists in equity when it actually does not. Programs that function at less than 50% of the time in the non-English language are not “immersion.” This is important to note, because according to: “Students from full immersion programs are generally more proficient in reading, writing, listening, and speaking the second language than those from partial immersion programs. Partial immersion students, in turn, are more proficient than students who are taught the second language in traditional foreign language classes.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Indigenous Hyperconsciousness in Language Revitalization**

The following terms were coined and defined by a team of researchers at Ka Haka ‘Ula o Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo in the summer of 2016. This team included doctoral students X̣uneī Lance Twitchell, Jeremy Tehota’kerá:tonh Green, J. Tinakpáhngē S. Teria, and faculty members Scott Saft and William Wilson.

**dynamic unstratified plural coexistence:** An active resistance to all notions of superiority in social and mental spheres that relies on *Indigenous hyperconsciousness* to create safety zones for Indigenous and non-Indigenous consciousnesses to occupy the same spaces and times without the need to stratify into higher and lower structures. By accepting the limitlessness of time and space, and rejecting the limited perspective of a binary “one thing or the other” existence, then times and spaces can be seen as limitless and accepting of multiple and simultaneous consciousnesses without the need to rank them or determine which ones are superior for given uses and places. This resistance must be continuous and steadfast in order to render powerless deeply rooted notions of white superiority that are foundational in many colonial spaces and structures.

**Indigenous counter-hegemonic transformation:** A theory that identifies social hegemony as an

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5 Brondum, Jack and Nancy Stenson. “Types of Immersion Education: An Introduction.” The ACIE Newsletter 1:2 (February 1998). Retrieved from [https://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol1/Feb1998\\_ImmersTypes.html](https://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol1/Feb1998_ImmersTypes.html)

illusion that can be replaced with concepts of equity and co-existence in colonial spaces, given that agency is claimed and utilized by Indigenous voices of particular places. The process of counter-hegemony relies on *Indigenous hyperconsciousness* to actively identify and dismantle social structures, norms, and laws that inhibit equality through processes of othering, ignorance, and perceived social diminishment. In order to initiate and maintain the re-establishment of the Indigenous voice, social planning and engineering are seen through a lens that refuses to fragment and rejects colonial problem identification and solving methodologies.

**Indigenous hyperconsciousness:** A theory of Indigenous awareness that operates simultaneously in multiple times and spaces, superseding individualism and fragmented viewpoints of reality, and is based in the thought world of Indigenous languages of particular places. This critical lens can be used in analyses of colonial forces that continually attempt to reshape Indigenous consciousness in relation to the Euroamerican ways of knowing, and operates in continuous hyper-awareness of those invasive consciousnesses.

**Indigenous language ecosystems:** The totality of a language and everything it is connected to through time and space, including the physical landscapes upon which the language was born through, people who speak it, domains where it is spoken, various social structures through which the language may theoretically move, and animate, inanimate, and spiritual beings that have co-existed with the language.

**Indigenous metacognition:** An awareness of all social macro, meso, and micro policies governing people, places, and expected social activities, including how these policies influence individual and collective thought processes, particularly within oppressive systems. Individuals and groups decide which policies they internalize and which ones they externalize in their own realms of morality and desire, allowing them to determine which policies will be followed and which will be violated, either overtly or covertly. This must occur in continuous time while deconstructing cultural hegemonic value systems and methodologies in order to engineer the recovery of Indigenous spaces of thought and existence.

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