

INNOVATION, REFLECTION, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Kari A. B. Chew ¹
University of Oklahoma

Onowa McIvor
University of Victoria

Chokma, Kari A. B. Chew saholhchifo. Chikashsha saya. Chikashshanompa' ithanali. Chikashshiyaakni' attali. University of Oklahoma intoksalili. (Greetings, my name is Kari A. B. Chew. I am a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and a Chickasaw language learner. I live in the Chickasaw Nation and work for the University of Oklahoma.)

tânisi, Onowa McIvor nitisithîkâson. maskêkow-ininiw îkwa moniyaw iskwêw nîtha. kinosao sîpi oci nîtha. nêhithawîwin ê-kiskinohamâsiwin. ləkʷəŋən askiy nîwikin. (Greetings, Onowa McIvor is what they call me. I am Swampy Cree and Scottish–Canadian. I am from Norway House Cree Nation. I am learning my language—the Cree language. I live on ləkʷəŋən [Lekwungun] territory now.)

We acknowledge and respect the ləkʷəŋən peoples whose traditional territory the University of Victoria occupies and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

¹ Correspondence: Kari A. B. Chew, Oklahoma University, kchew@ou.edu

We come together as guest co-editors of this 2021 special issue of *WINHEC: International Journal of Indigenous Education Scholarship* entitled, “Indigenous Language Revitalization: Innovation, Reflection and Future Directions.” The aim of this special issue is to bring together diverse voices from many involved in Indigenous Language Revitalization (ILR) from across contexts to share innovations and discuss shared aspirations for Indigenous language work. As we collectively envision future directions in ILR, we center hope and uphold Indigenous sovereignties in language reclamation work.

This issue shares stories and research across generations and spaces related to past, present, and future directions of ILR. Authors who contributed to this special issue come from and/or work with communities across North and South America, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Africa, and Australia. They are scholars, and many are community-based practitioners of ILR. Reflecting the core intention of this special issue to center Indigenous voices in ILR, every article is led or co-led by an Indigenous author or co-authors. Toward engaging in dialogue across contexts, we have organized collections of articles in this special issue around four key themes.

Language Education and Pedagogies in PreK-University Spaces

ILR scholars and practitioners are developing and using innovative pedagogical strategies to support language education. This collection of articles explores efforts in early childhood to higher education educational spaces.

Ontario-based scholars Aleksandra Bergier (Polish settler) and Kim Anderson (Métis) share how Indigenous language education at the university level can embrace a supportive, self-directed learning model aligned with Indigenous pedagogies to accommodate diverse learners, including those who carry intergenerational trauma.

This collective of authors: Jack Kanya Buckskin (Kaurua, Narungga, and Wirangu), Taylor Tipu Power-Smith (Kaurua and Narungga), Jaylon Pila Newchurch, (Narungga and Kaurua), Tempestt Sumner-Lovett (Ngarrindjeri), Paul Finlay, Chester Schultz, and Rob Amery describe a collaboration between a language community and university with the establishment of Kaurua Warra Pintyanthi (KWP), a committee of Kaurua Elders, language enthusiasts, linguists, teachers, and researchers. This paper shares the work of this committee over the past two decades and the innovative strategies they have developed for language recovery of this small and “reintroduced” language.

Zimbabwean physicist Temba Dlodlo discusses his work translating physics terms into his mother tongue of isiNguni while advocating for the right of Indigenous students to education in their languages. The use of Indigenous African languages in education has profound implications for Africa’s participation in science and technology fields.

Georgina Tuari Stewart (Ngāti Kura, Ngāpuhi-nui-tonu, and Ngāti Whanaunga, Pare Hauraki) and Kīmai Tocker (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Maniapoto, and Waikato) provide a holistic overview of Māori medium education in Aotearoa. They offer hope as they reflect on immersion education in te reo Māori, from early childhood to doctoral studies.

Sites of Community-Grounded Innovations

Scholars and practitioners continue innovation in community, the heart of language revitalization work. The following authors represent urban and urban-based Nation's efforts exploring and conveying possibilities for language revival work in differing and various contexts—teaching us that our languages live and can continue in all places and spaces.

Nicki Benson and Khelsilem (Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh-Kwakw̓ak̓'wakw) convey the story of Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh language revitalization in the form of a glossary. By exploring words and their context, readers are invited to make connections and reflect on new possibilities for language work.

Lindsay A. Morcom (Ardoch Algonquin First Nation) explores the experiences of urban language learners at the Kingston Indigenous Languages Nest (KILN) in Kingston, Ontario. This research affirms that language revitalization is about more than learning the language; it is also about deepening connection to culture and identity.

Yola Ferrin Willie (Kwakw̓ak̓'wakw & Hałtzaqv Nations) surveys the possibilities for urban language learning outside of one's territory. Her analysis extends to the restorative possibilities for language learning when connecting to land, particularly when it is not your own.

Technologies for Language Revitalization

For several decades, various forms of technology have been experimented with and employed in ILR, furthering the reclamation and revitalization work in our field. This collection of papers spans examining Indigenous leadership in technological advancements, using GoPro cameras to record forest walks with master speakers, and language resource website development.

Nathan Thanyehténhas Brinklow (Turtle Clan from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory) examines Indigenous leadership within the development of language technologies. Walking readers through several examples, he encourages developers and collaborators to take an anti-colonial stance to Indigenous language digital work.

Mary Hermes (Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe), Meixi, Mel Engman (descendant of white settlers to the Great Lakes region), and James McKenzie (Diné) take up the intersection of language, land, and story through video-recording intergenerational (between Elders and youth) forest walks conducted in the language. Their paper illustrates the recording of walking and storying together as powerful tools for language reclamation.

Charlotte Ross (nīhithaw iskwīw), Joan Greyeyes (nēhiyaw iskwēw), and Onowa McIvor (maskēkow-ininiw) offer reflections on supporting ILR through technology. They story the development of the Circle of Indigenous Languages website, which provides access to nēhiyaw (Cree), Nahkawe, and Michif languages of Saskatchewan.

Storying Language Work Within and Beyond the Academy

Articles in this collection bring together groups of scholars to reflect on and share stories of pursuing community-engaged language work and research while working or studying at universities.

Storying their collective experiences of language reclamation from within and outside of the academy, Kari A. B. Chew (Chickasaw Nation), Sheilah E. Nicholas (Hopi), Candace K. Galla (Kanaka Hawai'i from Hawai'i Island), Keiki Kawai'ae'a (Keaukaha, Hawai'i of the Kanilehua rain), Wesley Y. Leonard (Miami Tribe of Oklahoma), and Wilson de Lima Silva (originally from Manaus, Brazil) offer a reflection on intentional language research. Their cumulative perspectives as practitioner–researchers–scholar–educators encourage readers to reflect on how and why we research, in ways that can and should benefit Indigenous peoples.

Using the metaphor of the 'a'ali'i shrub native to Hawai'i and the wáhta oterontonnì:'a (sugar maple sapling) native to the Haudenosaunee territory, Ryan DeCaire (Kanien'kehá:ka), Naupaka Damienne Joaquin (Hawaiian), Nicholas Keali'i Lum (Hawaiian), and Ian Nāhulu Maioho (Hawaiian) come together as emerging scholars to reflect on innovations in language revitalization from their respective Mohawk and Hawaiian communities.

Exploring research partnerships and the spaces within and between Aboriginal communities and universities, Anjilkurri (Rhonda) Radley (Birrbay/Dhanggati), Tess Ryan (Birpai), and Kylie Dowse (Gamillaraay) convey the challenges and benefits of decolonizing

universities. They explore their various roles and co-existence as insider-outsiders within their Indigenous language research work

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

We were honored to be trusted by the WINHEC leadership and Editor-in-Chief to host a special issue focused on Indigenous language revitalization. We see this group upholding the values they transmit, as, “dedicated to the exploration and advancement of issues related to Indigenous education, research, culture, and language central to the lives of WINHEC nations and members” (winhec.org/journal). On the eve of the UNESCO-declared International Decade of Indigenous Languages,² this collection offers an opportunity to engage with a diverse array of innovations in the field of Indigenous language reclamation, revitalization, recovery, and maintenance.

We acknowledge the wisdom and knowledges shared by all authors and also acknowledge the authors who shared their work and will continue development towards other forms of sharing—kinanâskomitinawaw, yakkookay iichimani, our heartfelt thanks. We would also like to acknowledge the strangeness inherent in insisting on positionality statements with each article to ground the work in person and place, while also enduring blind review. We understand many see this as an anti-Indigenous practice. Peer blind review has its merits, offering valuable and important feedback to authors, while protecting those who selflessly and voluntarily give their time to help improve authors’ work, but can leave the receiving

² <https://en.unesco.org/news/upcoming-decade-indigenous-languages-2022-2032-focus-indigenous-language-users-human-rights>

author feeling exposed and vulnerable receiving disembodied feedback and advice. We tried to mitigate that by owning the advice when it was ours as editors and especially when we agreed (or disagreed) with the reviewer's comments.

We acknowledge the limitations of this special issue. Every collection is but a moment in time and a snapshot of those who were either ready or able. We acknowledge that the papers shared in this collection are also in one settler language. In that sense, this is a collection of innovative papers but not in any way a cohesive reflection of our field. To that end, we encourage you to engage further to fully explore the state and innovations in our field, and especially to engage with resources led and produced by Indigenous peoples such as the Crowshoe et al. (2021) collection, as well as organizations like Natives4Linguistics (<https://natives4linguistics.wordpress.com>).

Finally, we offer our thanks to our collaborators: Editor-in-Chief Dr. Paul Whitinui; UVic Libraries; copy-editing assistance from Madeline Walker; and generous funding from both the President's Chair program at UVic and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council whose support assisted this special issue to come to fruition.

Reference

Crowshoe, L., Genee, I., Peddle, M., Smith, J., & Snoek, C. (Eds.). (2021). *Sustaining Indigenous languages connecting communities, teachers, and scholars*. Northern Arizona University.

Citation: Chew, K. A. B. & O. McIvor. (2021). Innovation, reflection, and future directions: An introduction to the special issue on Indigenous language revitalization. *WINHEC: International Journal of Indigenous Education Scholarship*, 16(1), pp. 4-11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18357/wj1202120272>.