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Resounding the clarion call: Indigenous language learners and documentation

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Abstract

In this paper we discuss a five-year Ojibwemowin documentation and description project and illustrate how we adapted the documentation agenda in response to reclamation goals, in particular, with an eye to the needs of language learners. The science of documentation no longer stops at preservation; the groundswell of demand for respect for the intellectual and linguistic rights of Indigenous peoples must be considered. There is a call to action by and for speakers of Indigenous endangered languages, although how that action should occur is often unclear. This project offers one case to illustrate the negotiation of relationships among participants who held multiple roles (Elders/speakers, applied linguists, advanced language learners – many are tribal and community members and some work for universities) to show how consideration of Indigenous peoples' intellectual and linguistic rights can shape a documentation project for language reclamation. We critically examine the processes and priorities of Anishinaabe language learners who have skills to document conversations and produce linguistic transcriptions. We discuss how in this process new priorities for documentation emerged, including a focus on everyday language, meaning-making, inclusive documentation norms, and collaborative analysis. This represents a traversing of discourses: our research engaged with the dominant paradigms for documentation funding and training, but also a commitment to remain responsive to an interpretation of what was dictated by community needs. We argue that our focus on language reclamation within this project pushes the documentation paradigm to shift in particular ways. We conclude by urging other researchers to consider how documentation work should be shaped by goals of reclamation.

Keywords: Indigenous language documentation and ethics, collaboration, construction of Indigenous knowledge, language reclamation

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1. Introduction[1]

In the aftermath of worldwide colonisation and attempted genocide, Indigenous communities across the globe work to maintain cultural and linguistic continuity (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). As handfuls of language activists in these communities work toward language *maintenance* (Harrison & Papa 2005), *regeneration* (Hohepa 2006), and *reclamation* (Leonard 2011, 2012), some have formed partnerships with sociolinguists, documentary linguists, and linguistic anthropologists. Numerous academic accounts of these partnerships address the sense of urgency to document Indigenous languages 'before it's too late', and also to characterise the changing roles of applied linguists involved in these collaborative projects (Amery 2009; Hermes 2012; Penfield et al. 2008; Penfield & Tucker 2011). These roles are worthy of scrutiny as the nature of fieldwork and its objectives continue to change (Cameron et al. 1993; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009). In this context we ask, *what are we (meaning the people with the common goal of language reclamation) learning and taking up in order to shift the paradigm of documentation to bolster these new perspectives in academic research?* As some scholars have questioned the framing of endangered languages as 'dying' or 'becoming extinct' (Davis 2017; King & Hermes 2014; Leonard 2008; Meek 2011; Perley 2012), in response to this awareness, we critically question the ideological underpinnings and discursive practices as we interpret them, within the field of Documentary Linguistics.

In this paper, we present an account of an Ojibwemowin[2] documentation project called *Ojibwe Conversations* (covered in detail in Section 3) that describes some of the ways in which relationships between participants shaped and shifted project goals in light of local outcomes as well as broader research paradigms. Originally conceived in line with evolving documentation paradigms that seek to capture everyday language in domains outside of ceremony and formal storytelling genres (Amery 2009; Messineo 2008; Woodbury 2003), the details for carrying out this project underwent a shift. In

[1] This material is based upon work generously supported by the National Science Foundation/National Endowment for the Humanities Documenting Endangered Languages Program under Grant No. 0854473. The authors also gratefully acknowledge feedback from Linguistics staff at the University of Melbourne on an early draft of this paper.

[2] This Algonquian language is commonly referred to in a variety of ways, including Anishinaabemowin, Ojibwemowin, and Ojibwe. The terms Anishinaabemowin and Ojibwemowin are used synonymously to describe the multiple dialects of the language of the Ojibwe or Anishinaabe people. The work referred to in this paper has been mostly done in the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin (United States), with the Southwestern dialect of what is generally referred to as Ojibwe.

response to evolving reclamation[3] goals of the community collaborators, the project's disposition shifted away from meeting the perceived needs of Linguistics and toward an agenda that was oriented to reclamation, some of which only became clear as the project unfolded.

In order not to reinforce the artificial binary between 'linguist' and 'community member', we attempt to avoid representing each of these as a separate or static identity category. However, at stake here is what constitutes the 'identity' of the players, and how those formations affect decision-making in fieldwork. That is to say, for example, if you trained as a linguist in a particular language, how is your idea of 'expert' challenged by members of the speech community? Linguists experience identity as fluidly as any other human, as they move across different communities and contexts (Stebbins 2012). In this geographic area, the Upper Midwest of the United States, there are an increasing number of linguists who also identify as Indigenous language community members and/or tribal members. Furthermore, the ideologies associated with different identities and communities also circulate in individuals of both groups. As long as these discourses are positioned as competing or, at the very least, separate solitudes (Rice 2009), financial and cultural-capital resources will privilege the academic discourse, as this is the normalised positioning of the academy (Bousquet 2008; Dance, Gutiérrez & Hermes 2010; Smith, Dyke & Hermes 2013). Making decisions about what research questions to pursue, what constitutes 'good' work, which audiences to direct results to, or who will benefit from the work, is always a political decision, albeit veiled in the bureaucracies of institutions (Smith 2012). In this paper we ask readers to consider how documentation has been shaped by academic structures and how to document beyond the 'clarion call'. The ideas of what counts as documentation, indeed, what counts as language, need to be challenged by directions and lessons from grassroots Indigenous language movements.

Linguists are perpetually in search of 'a balance between the analytical study of the language and the responsibilities to the community' (Rice 2009:47), particularly in Indigenous language contexts. For documentary linguists who cite the spectre of language loss as a driver of their documentation work, there could also be a sense of the colonialism and hegemonic power of English (or other languages) which has given rise to this current moment. When these larger structures of power are taken as a starting point, responsibilities toward language reclamation efforts become obvious. This is not so much out of a feeling of reparations or guilt, but moreover, an

[3] Following the theme of this special issue and in recognition of the community-oriented epistemologies and processes represented by the term, we use 'reclamation' in this paper instead of 'revitalisation' (Leonard 2012, 2017).

acknowledgement of the value of diversity. Yet, the messiness of collaboration and interdisciplinary work causes some researchers to turn inward toward the academy (Austin 2010) or even to reject collaboration as unegalitarian 'linguistic social work' (Crippen & Robinson 2013:126) that interferes with 'scientific goals'. In this paper we show how the messiness can and should be embraced by the field. Disrupting current understandings of insider/outsider, linguistic authenticity, and expertise also disrupts current conceptions of documentation research. As we show here, a cooperative project (by design and in execution) benefits the field by increasing the number of speakers as well as the number of linguists. This approach calls community members into academic endeavors and in turn, allows researchers to be called into ongoing community work, with an emphasis on 'doing' language rather than on 'saving' it.

Following the introduction of the paper (Section 1) and the authors (Section 2), we offer an overview of the project by characterising its inception, its context, and the people involved in it (Section 3). Our account offers an approach of negotiating decision-making, starting with inception and design (Linn 2014). That is, we considered the documentation project from the various perspectives of applied linguists, descriptive linguists, immersion teachers, and community members (learners and Elders). In many instances, the individuals described here embody more than one of these identities, blurring and challenging the distinctions. We focus on the key role of adult language learners who became learner-linguists within the project. Next we present three examples that illustrate how documentation objectives intersected with community goals of language reclamation (Section 4). We examine the processes and priorities of Ojibwe/Anishinaabe language learners who have acquired skills to document conversations, and discuss how in this process we (language learners) have learned more clearly what our priorities for documentation are. Finally, we discuss how the project's operation at these points of intersection represents a traversing of discourses: our research engaged with the dominant paradigms for documentation funding, but also a commitment to remain responsive to opportunities to meet the community's needs (Section 5). Our focus on language reclamation pushed the documentation paradigm to shift in positive ways. Through an examination of these shifts we show that ideas of 'researcher/consultant', 'authenticity', and 'individual expert' are tied to ideologies that work against language reclamation.

2. Positionality

Throughout this paper, the pronoun 'we' is used to refer to the two authors in arguing in favor of community-based, reclamation-oriented documentation projects. Though the general perspective that we present is unified, our

individual interpretive lenses come from very different backgrounds and experiences.

Mary Hermes: I am a Native American of mixed heritage, with community links at Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe reservation in Northern Wisconsin. I played a central role in the *Ojibwe Conversations* project (i.e., designed the project, wrote the grant, and organised community members and linguists to take part). Working as an educational scholar in the language movement for 15 years, I am always trying to leverage my university position to direct more funds and projects to reclamation work. I am a tenured faculty member in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota. As a researcher, I have been able to work in an interdisciplinary way, drawing from applied linguistics, cultural studies, and feminist post-structuralism. My Ojibwe language skills are at an intermediate proficiency. For this article, it is important to note that I do not speak officially for a particular community, but from experience as a person who works in both university and Indigenous communities.

Mel M. Engman: I am a white, English-speaking woman from the Midwestern United States, and I am an Ojibwe language learner. I came to the *Ojibwe Conversations* project only at the tail end of its production in 2012, as a postgraduate assistant with an applied linguistics background, to work on formatting transcripts and assist in transferring the files to the university's digital archives. It was my first foray into documentary linguistics and language reclamation, and my involvement in the project has had a lasting impact on how I understand the potential for academic work to intersect with community objectives and social change. Though my influence on the project was minimal, its influence on me has been immeasurable and this paper, in part, represents subsequent years of 'Ojibwe conversations' with Mary and others about language, colonialism, and research. Moreover, engagements with community learner-linguists in this documentation project resonate with my recent doctoral work that examines language use in a teacher-learner's (Hinton 2003) kindergarten classroom, where the tools of research can be wielded in innovative ways for homegrown social and institutional change.

3. Project overview

Ojibwe Conversations, the documentation cum language reclamation project described herein, was conceptualised as an opportunity to capture and document fluid, imperfect, everyday, informal conversations among speakers of Ojibwe. Narratives have long been the hallmark of Algonquian scholarship and linguistic documentation, yet in this large language (from a North American perspective) the documentation of informal conversations was missing. For Ojibwe language learners such interactional speech is a primary source of input, and its under-representation in the general corpus of Ojibwe

language documentation was a major motivator in the project design. The focus of *Ojibwe Conversations* was thus on language in interaction instead of narratives. For a documentation grant this was unusual, but the messages from ongoing discussions in the community were clear: a focus on communicative language would serve a desire to be able to use Ojibwe at home. This was interpreted by Hermes and focused into a grant proposal that included community members, especially Elders, as participants, growing out of a desire for reclamation rather than out of academic aspirations. Collaboratively, the idea was vetted by most of the Elders who were to participate in the project. Hermes has been shaped intellectually by sociolinguistics, cultural studies, and feminism, and so was not driven by the expectations of traditional language documentation and applied linguistics when designing the project, but rather decided to prioritise community interests.

Our recordings of Elders were pre-determined only in terms of the theme (e.g., sisters reminiscing about their childhood, asking an Elder for help learning language, making fry bread) and the settings (e.g., a bait shop, a supermarket, a resort), which, in turn, drove the unscripted content of the conversations. The other idea that bound the conversations was to have Elders speak to someone who shared a dialect. This made sense to the linguists we consulted with, although at this point of language shift, the few remaining Elder speakers are accustomed to speaking across a wide swath of variation.

Over the course of five years the number of participants in the project grew. There were at least three linguists, two educational researchers, approximately ten language learners, and 12 Elders. There were staff at *Grassroots Indigenous Multimedia* who managed data and were responsible for technical aspects of the recording; then on the distribution end, the University of Minnesota library staff were key in collaborating to upload the corpus to the open-access digital conservancy[4]. Each of these groups performed different roles in the project (see Hermes, Bang & Marin 2012 for full description): the linguists trained all of the language learners in transcription and annotation plus use of the ELAN software, and advised extensively on aspects of language capture and process. Education researchers thought about the language learning opportunities through and beyond the completion of the archives. Language learners were the foot soldiers at the camps where we performed the capture, feeding Elders, fetching props, taking notes, transcribing and translating, and generally absorbing all the Ojibwemowin discourse they could. And last, the Elders directed and created the short vignettes we developed for semi-scripting the conversations.

[4] https://conservancy.umn.edu/, accessed 2017-08-31.

The role of adult language learners was central, as they were to be the beneficiaries of training and language learning in this project. This group conducted transcriptions as a mechanism for both creating an archive and learning language. They were a target audience for the archived materials, as well as recipients of linguistic training. They were eager to sit and listen to recordings, to attempt to transcribe, and especially to work with Elders on transcriptions. This kind of work proved unsustainable for long periods of time, mainly because it was consultant work and no one individual could continue the effort of transcriptions 40 hours a week, week after week. In other words, it was part-time work, and for the young adult language learners who needed an income, not a sustainable job. Five years and many hours of transcription later, it had become clear that the solo version of transcription was problematic for this project. The team also learned that the idealised notion of an exact correspondence between what was said and what different individuals heard was far from the reality of transcribing speech. All of the transcriptions were various interpretations, made with the hope that transcribers were staying as close as possible to what they believed was uttered.

In the end, 12 hours of movies and transcriptions/translations were deposited in the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy.[5] As at April 2017, there have been over 3,000 downloads throughout the previous two years. This frequent use of the archive demonstrates its unique utility for the community. In addition to this product, second language learners became familiar with a basic documentation process, and especially with transcribing using ELAN transcription software (a skill which has spread widely among language learners locally).[6] As *endangered* language learners, exposure to this kind of language input was precious. Developing a working or closer relationship with a speaker was also valuable (Perley 2012). Lastly, an abundance of learning materials have been created from this resource: a learner-friendly curriculum (see Appendix A), children's books, and YouTube videos.[7] Too often, the scarce learning materials that do exist have been made from a grammar-oriented approach, and are devoid of social context,

[5] http://hdl.handle.net/11299/163235, accessed 2017-08-31.

[6] One of the objectives of the National Science Foundation *Documenting Endangered Languages* program grants is training, so this unanticipated outcome, of ELAN software having a broad popular use among language learners, is good on several levels. It provides a useful tool among people who are not involved in linguistics academically, but as a part of the reclamation movement. Solid state recorders have also become common in this language learning community.

[7] See http://gim-ojibwe.org/new-products/ for a list of the books; for the YouTube videos, see https://www.youtube.com/user/GrassrootsIM, accessed 2017-08-31.

representing language stripped of its communicative and expressive functionality, which does little to help learners understand how the language is used in everyday interactions. We hypothesised that hearing conversations, with interlocutors embedded in a context, was exactly the kind of input many of the learners on the project were missing.

In short, involvement in the project expanded the idea of language learning for many of us, enhancing our skills as applied linguists and descriptive linguists. As learner/transcribers there was a layer of meta-awareness acquired in the process of producing transcripts. Not only were we focused on the sounds we heard, but also on the uses and structures that were new to us. For instance, many of the learner/transcribers developed heightened awareness of vowel length (one of the most difficult things for English-to-Ojibwe learners to hear correctly), the practice of shortening or omitting initial morphemes (for example, '*wiidookawiyan*' instead of '*gaa-wiidookawiyan*') and, more generally, an awareness of frequency of forms we may have assumed to be used infrequently (e.g., the high frequency of subordinate clauses in conversation). Eye-opening for some, and validating for others, the language of first speakers and their contributions to the task of producing transcripts was influential for all of those involved in data collection and analysis.

This project of documentation and description shaped learner-linguists' understanding of their language. Similarly, through collaboration with learners, this project also shaped the authors' conceptions of the purpose(s) of language documentation and description, prompting us to think through some of the ways in which we can push against the academic tradition of documentation.

4. Documentation for reclamation

Documentation and description are regularly presented as interrelated or, at least, as concomitant linguistic tasks associated with 'describing a language' (Himmelmann 2004:3), yet, as Himmelmann points out, the work (i.e., products, procedures, and methodological issues) each activity entails is different and can be conceived of separately from the other (but see also Austin & Grenoble 2007). *Ojibwe Conversations* was originally thought of as a documentation project, one that would contribute a much-needed corpus of spoken, conversational Ojibwe language. Yet it also involved a descriptive component, enlisting linguists to supply some analysis of Ojibwe in under-studied discursive contexts. The documentation work involved video-recording the spoken language and then transcribing and translating it, while the description work came later as project participants sought to understand the rules and parameters governing everyday Ojibwe. It is important to touch on the 'work' of this documentary project because that is where documentation (and description) intersected with the reclamation agenda.

Documentary Linguistics has grown up as a subfield of Linguistics, arising in response to the growing need for the creation of 'a lasting record of the world's endangered languages' (Austin 2010:10). Because of this connection to a constantly changing state of affairs 'on the ground', documentary linguists assert a greater concern for the broad usability of what they produce. Documentation research seeks to move beyond the more traditional conception of 'linguists writing primarily for other linguists' (Amery 2009:138) by producing discourse-centered representations of languages 'for posterity' (Austin 2010) and in cooperation with and support of the language speakers (Grinevald 2003; Penfield et al. 2008; Woodbury 2003). Rather than creating grammars and dictionaries for historical and/or typological investigations, some documentary linguists lean toward the production of language primers and subtitled videos (Dobrin, Austin & Nathan 2009). Yet, it is not entirely clear that these products meet the needs and wants of different kinds of users. How might collaboration better inform outcomes? Or, for whom are these alternative outcomes *really* being produced?

Dobrin et al. (2009:40) express their discomfort with the ways in which documentary and descriptive linguistics can transform languages into 'indices, objects, and technical encodings', reductive outcomes that work against the supposed speaker-oriented objectives of the field, functioning as an obstacle to language maintenance and reclamation rather than as a scaffold. Furthermore, they recognise the insidious role of power in academic linguistics. They cite forces of commodification and standardisation as having an influence on the academy's approach to language documentation projects (e.g., basing a language's value on its degree of endangerment, or commodifying community relationships in terms of 'transacted objects' (Dobrin et al. 2009:43)). Thus, the discourses of endangerment that appear to have inspired a relatively recent rush to document languages occupy a rather complex ideological space. Researchers who work to resist these discourses are still bound by institutional and academic funding constraints to engage with them in order to establish the legitimacy required to continue their work.

In the next section we provide three examples from *Ojibwe Conversations*, a government-funded documentation project that illustrates how documentation work intersected with and was shaped by community goals of language reclamation. This type of project, supported by discursive practices of the academy and funders can, at the very least, miss opportunities to interact with reclamation goals and, at worst, take away resources meant for language users as the intended audience. It is *because of* the *Ojibwe Conversations* project's cooperative relationship with teachers, linguists, and community members that it had to move beyond typical conceptions of documentation fieldwork and end products. Through these examples we show how by increasingly inviting community members into decision-making roles the process is made more reflective

of what the community feels is important, and how the academic endeavor of documentation can contribute more directly to community projects of language reclamation.

4.1. From narratives to conversations

Ojibwe Conversations emerged from the interpretation of community desire (to restore everyday spoken Ojibwe), though its conversational focus is not unique to language documentation projects (see, e.g., *Unangam Tunuu (Aleut language) Conversation Corpus* compiled by Alice Taff[8]). The 'genre' (Nathan 2009) of the project is not particularly significant in itself. Rather, the project participants' commitment to centering on conversational language is noteworthy because the commitment was rooted in language reclamation. When the purpose of documenting and describing a language is to grow more speakers (as opposed to 'scientific objectives' (Crippen & Robinson 2013)), the approach to language data changes.

At one point, in the midst of data collection, one linguist commented that some of the language we were getting was 'not very interesting'. She was concerned with rarely used conjugations, a reflection of the inclination among descriptive linguists for the historically and typologically novel. Not surprisingly, these linguistically 'interesting' events were the more outlier moments for speakers, moments where they were stretching their use of the language to create something unusual. Yet, for those of us learning, and wanting to use Ojibwe in our everyday lives, nearly the opposite was true. We wanted to hear how speakers conversed with each other in an ordinary way. What were short informal exchanges like? What were the idioms, contractions, and high frequency phrases? What are the sentence fragments that are commonly used, but unlikely to be given to a researcher as 'language examples'? (Austin & Sallabank 2017). Such words and language 'chunks' cannot be found in dictionaries, and these questions cannot be answered through elicitation of a monologic narrative, speech, or interview. Rich collections of narratives as well as ceremonial and cultural language (e.g., Bloomfield & Nichols 1991; Staples & Gonzalez 2015; Treuer 2001) have been invaluable for learners, and for reclamation. However, short, everyday improvised exchanges were completely missing from the descriptive literature in Ojibwe or Anishinaabemowin.

The segment of talk in Excerpt 1 is an example of how the everyday language of problem solving provides an alternative linguistic richness (i.e., pragmatic rather than lexical or syntactic information), different from the

[8] available at http://elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0027, accessed 2017-08-31.

'interesting' and novel or unique forms preferred by some linguists. The purpose of this particular movie was to show two first speakers (N: Niib, Z: Zhaangweshi) making tea and coffee. Unexpectedly (to all of us), they could not find the tea bags. This stretch of Ojibwe talk shows the speakers realizing and identifying a problem, collaboratively working through the problem, and then coming up with a solution. The functional language and high frequency words in this segment are rich, and yet the unique items are few, making it exemplary for beginners to actually use in productive ways.

Excerpt 1: 'Mashkimodens Aniibiish' (*Tea Bag*)[9]

1	N:	dibi go iw mashkimodens aniibiish atemagak *I wonder where the tea bag is*
2	Z:	dibi iidog *I wonder where it must be*
3	N:	maazhaa maa *maybe here*
4	Z:	gaawiin gegoo *nothing*
5	N:	gaawiin gaye go *not here either*
6	Z:	mii sa go dibi iw? *I wonder where?*
7	N:	maazhaa... *maybe...*
8	Z:	iwidi na go giin? *you looked over there?*
9	N:	maazhaa adaaweweigamigong niga-o-naadin. *maybe I'll go to the store and get some.*

[9] extracted from: Grassroots Indigenous Multimedia. 2006. *Ojibwemodaa* (Version 1.0). Nashua, NH: Transparent Language, Inc.

The everyday, routine, and mundane types of speech are recognised in linguistic anthropology (Duranti 2009; Hymes 1968) and social psychology (Cole 1998; Rogoff 2003) as carrying patterns of communication that typify a particular culture. Much of what is communicated in this exchange is implied. In line 8, for example, the Ojibwe word for 'looked' is completely missing, an unlikely construction then for an English-to-Ojibwe language learner. When hyper-focused on word meaning, learners often sound 'book-learned' to Elders (King & Hermes 2014), but when the social context is missing from our input, it is nearly impossible not to overly focus on word-for-word utterances. For this reason, it is the productive, communicative interaction between interlocutors that the reclamation movement relies on. When learners use Ojibwe to carry out everyday tasks, to collaborate and relate with one another, they are producing and reproducing their own discourse (Gee 2015) and in this sense we are simply returning Ojibwe language use to 'normal'.

This is not to disparage the value of monologic narratives, stories told by one person, which fulfill a valuable niche in the culture. Many Elders are comfortable sitting still, recalling events of years past, or telling a fictitious or traditional story. In terms of transcription, having no movement and no other interlocutors to contend with is also a more ideal condition for the researcher. Conversations often have movement, gesture, pauses, facial expressions, sounds, interruptions, overlaps, and no set beginning or end. The movement alone presents a plethora of variables to record, and if the gestures are integral to understanding what is said, audio alone will not suffice (Norris 2002; Ochs 1979; Streeck, Goodwin & LeBaron 2011). Beyond this, Indigenous people are known for oral traditions and storytelling, so narratives seem a natural fit. Finding an individual who is willing and capable of this is not an insurmountable task. Yet, Indigenous people are also known for traditions of discussion, debate, and consensus-based problem solving. Like people everywhere, language mediates the big and the small of living in the company of others. For this learner-oriented reclamation movement, extended single-speaker stretches of talk fall short of the need for models of interactive pragmatics.

4.2. Everything is 'authentic' language

While section 4.1 mentioned an example of a linguist's *ennui* with the everyday language at the heart of the project, the next example serves as a counterbalance to demonstrate the flexibility that grows from a more inclusive approach to documentation. At the gatherings that constituted a majority of the audio and video capture, second language speakers almost always outnumbered Elders. For example, at one gathering, held in summer at a lake resort there were five or six elders who rotated in and

out throughout the week, and nine learners/community members (including Hermes and three other researchers). The intention was that all levels of learners could be involved in the process and the initial translations. For many of the participants, the experience of interaction with a small group of Ojibwe-speaking elders in a social setting was rare. There were many informal opportunities to listen and converse with the entire group. Although the unspoken rule was to record only Elders speaking, many of these interactions were also recorded by letting the cameras run at different times.

The team experienced a watershed moment when one linguist suggested that 'all language can be a part of the record, even the second language learners' [language]', echoing sentiments expressed elsewhere (e.g., Austin & Sallabank 2017; Mithun 2001). It was at this moment that the team became conscious of their attempts to re-create the documentary practice of only recording the most 'pure' speech – in this case, only first speakers of Ojibwe. Such a focus on 'purity' treats language as a relic (Amery 2009; Leonard 2011; Perley 2012) rather than as the creative, productive, and responsive cultural practice that it actually is; a puristic approach is antithetical to reclamation objectives. From this point on, documentary practices shifted to inclusion of language beyond Elder-Elder dyads. The language of the learners and, especially, the language of the Elders in interaction with the learners became a particularly instructive data source for the project.

Transcribing learner language (Tarone & Swierzbin 2009) could be extremely valuable in developing teaching materials informed by interlanguage, although this kind of analysis was beyond the scope of the project. Furthermore, recording more complete learner-Elder interactions offers a glimpse into how first speakers react and respond to learner language, and how learner language is shaped by this feedback. As with Extract 1, interactions are invaluable to learner-oriented reclamation work. To ignore the role of learner language in shaping talk is to ignore the dynamic and adaptable nature of the language and to limit our understanding of how language works across a particularly salient social domain.

4.3. Transcription as part of living language

Bucholtz (2007:785) argues that:

> transcription is not solely a research methodology for understanding discourse but also, and just as importantly, a sociocultural practice of representing discourse.

The working method that was demonstrated to the team in the early stages of the project went something like this: after initially recording a conversation, a transcriber (i.e., a community member/learner) would work (immediately) with the speakers to obtain a rough translation. Then, after compressing the digital data, a working version was created in ELAN for transcription. The next task was to go through the video and audio again with at least one speaker/Elder who was in the original capture session for a tight, precise transcription. This process differed from conventional documentation, wherein the transcriber would most likely be an experienced linguist, well-versed in the structure of the language, and the task of making transcriptions would be completed with a language consultant and a researcher (who may not necessarily speak the language s/he is transcribing). The idea behind this project, however, was to train community members (i.e., users of the language) to transcribe in the midst of their development as learners of Ojibwe. Ten different second language learners were employed at various times to work on these transcripts, and using good recording equipment and transcribing video using ELAN became a common practice in this community. While slowing down the rate of transcription, we exponentially grew the number of people capable and interested in transcribing, with the end result being more material completed than any individual could manage. Yet, the second pass at the transcript with Elders was never quick. Working alone as a second language learner on transcripts was also problematic as learners were never quite sure of their own skill levels, thus second guessing what was heard became the bane of this project. It created a need for checking nearly everything, which cut down on both the amount the team could finish for archiving and the speed at which they felt a transcript was 'done'. In other words, quantity of finished product (at least, relative to what trained linguists could produce in the same amount of time) was traded for the benefit of language acquisition by community members.

Deciding that enough time had been spent transcribing was difficult, and so the project was extended by two years without additional funding. The ambiguity around finishing demonstrated that much of transcribing was interpretation, knowing context, relationships, community, and culture. In a sense this was all part of the act of communication, and now part of what project participants considered to be 'language' in a broad way. Transcription was a much less stable act, especially transcription of groups of speakers in interaction, than was initially understood from consuming narrative transcripts. Even when the transcription process involved the speakers themselves, there was often some degree of interpretation and guesswork. Furthermore, intimate knowledge of the socio-cultural context as well as firsthand knowledge of the speakers and their families proved valuable on more than one occasion.

Another shift in the project was brought about by the difficulty of transcription for the transcribers as well. All the second language learners were interested to a great degree in how the structure and morphology were applied to make meaning in the conversations. As newly trained linguists, the learners' interest in analysis was enthusiastic, though this enthusiasm was clearly linked to the reclamation agenda. Less interested in dissecting or analysing this information for any type of broader linguistic analysis (e.g., historical or typological analyses), the project participants made deliberate choices that favored devoting more time to producing low-level transcriptions for mass distribution. This is perhaps the clearest instance of divergence between academic linguistics and linguistics for language reclamation. In this case, the project team would rather continue to produce basic transcriptions and think about distributing or using the materials for lessons, than to create interlinear glossed texts as examples of particular linguistic features which may be valuable for future typological analysis. This is the point at which the expert language of linguistics (Gee 2015) was not particularly useful to the majority of the language learners on the project.

The decision to focus on transcript production and interpretive fidelity was shaped by aims of language reclamation, and it, in turn, has shaped some local reclamation efforts as the open access corpus is readily available for (and currently used by) linguists and educators alike. Since the corpus is completely open, all the data can be downloaded and analyzed or further annotated by users with various purposes. For instance, the movies and their transcripts are the heart of curriculum materials currently in development that integrate eclectic and communicative language pedagogies into classroom materials, activities, and tasks. Lessons learned from the *Ojibwe Conversations* project collaborators have extended into how we think about the strengths and needs of teacher-learners (Hinton 2003, 2011) at the forefront of the reclamation movement.

5. Traversing discourses (discussion)

Across the three examples presented above, we see strands of documentary and reclamation activist discourses intersecting in different aspects of the *Ojibwe Conversations* project (e.g., project design, data collection, analysis). These discursive strands highlight themes that are central to the project described here, and salient to the general paradigm(s) associated with documentation in language reclamation contexts. In this section we identify and discuss how these intersectional themes shaped this particular language documentation project as well as the ways in which they can inform future endeavors, toward shared objectives of language reclamation across the 'two solitudes' (Rice 2009).

5.1. Blurring roles of position and audience

In this project, there was a blurring of roles among team members/ participants. Two of the participants were community members (one an enrolled tribal member, the other not) as well as researchers. There was also a non-Indigenous linguist who is considered by many to be a community or even tribal member, and there were Indigenous and non-Indigenous second language learners who were interested in acquiring documentation skills as well as any other tools that could be used for reclamation. There was no clear distinction between 'researcher' and 'consultant'; the blurring of roles moves positionality considerations outside the usual ideological space of an 'insider'/'outsider' binary division, demanding further critique of how relationships are conceived.

Past work examining positionality in documentation acknowledges the shortcomings of linguists as 'outsiders' in local language communities of which they are not members (Gerdts 1998; Grenoble 2009; Speas 2009). Indeed, an 'outsider' can find it difficult to recruit consultants and convince strangers of the value of their skillset. However, this reference to non-community member researchers as 'outsiders' is more complex than issues of data collection and reciprocity. Beyond perpetuating an insider/outsider binary division that can be detrimental to collaboration, it also serves to erase the historical legacy of racism associated with research institutions in colonial contexts (Battiste 2008; Mihesuah 2003; Smith 2012; Tuck 2009). Such terminology renders invisible the power structures in which researchers are often complicit, as their work is entangled with funding and academic and other professional legitimacy. The multiplicity of roles held by team members on the *Ojibwe Conversations* project disrupted divisions by putting community needs first, at the heart of the project. That is not to say that traditional structuring of hierarchies and power was absent, but rather that a collaborative project design allowed participants to buck traditional notions of 'reciprocity' (Penfield et al. 2008) as roles and goals were shared, rather than traded.

The *Ojibwe Conversations* project was designed to meet institutional and community goals by fulfilling the grant guidelines for documentation and archive creation, as well as providing budding speakers with access to Elders and practice in transcribing with them. These activities were designed to strengthen the learning of participants, as a part of a wider movement of reclamation. Valuing the everyday language of the Elders, documenting interactions with language learners, and transcription by and with linguists, language learners, and Elders prioritised language reclamation efforts, as a process and outcome of creating deliverables for the funding body.

5.2. Authenticity in change

The discourse of endangerment (Duchêne & Heller 2008; Moore, Pietikäinen & Blommaert 2010) draws on assumptions that language is fixed (i.e., bounded and countable) and 'authentic', that is to say, that there is, or *was* a 'pure' form of the Indigenous language being transmitted or studied, much like the idea of 'authenticity' that circulated broadly at one time in cultural anthropology prior to the postmodern critique of culture. Dobrin, Austin & Nathan (2007:1) describe it in this way:

> The discourse draws on and perpetuates naïve Western assumptions about languages as bounded denotational codes, each with a formally stable reality and a naturalised inherence in an ethnic group, often one that is typically conceived of as culturally grounded in a unique 'ecological niche'.

Amery (2009) describes 'traditional' documentation as narrative, autobiography, and accounts of traditional life. All of these genres draw legitimacy from a colonial-settler ideology, as described in the quotation above. Indigenous cultures and languages were bounded or defined at the time of colonial contact, and are generally understood as being on their way to becoming 'extinct'. In contrast, contemporary conversations about everyday things present strong evidence of a continued vibrant and current culture. Documentation focused on the past or the exotic, intent on preserving Indigenous languages for 'science' and not especially for people to use, are stuck in a paradigm which represents an endangerment (i.e., eventual extinction) mentality and does not support reclamation.

Ojibwe Conversations rejects an endangerment discourse in several ways. Firstly, the emphasis on conversational language as opposed to narratives focuses on language *in use* as a means of communication between two or more people, acknowledging its value as a modern cultural practice for achieving communicative goals beyond ceremony and oral histories. The situational contexts of some of the movies also contribute to a rather sly rejection of the idea that Ojibwe is an atrophied language of the past. Among the movies produced by this project are conversations between speakers cooking in a modern kitchen, making reservations at a resort, and shopping at a department store – social domains that were introduced long after the initial colonial contact, and which are part and parcel of modern Ojibwe life, illustrating the contemporary relevance of Ojibwe communication. Secondly, the project's openness to the talk of second language learners embraces the central significance of language reclamation in many Ojibwe communities. Language shift is a discouraging albeit present reality and an embrace of learner language and learner-Elder dyads in the archived collection of movies acknowledges this 'new normal', and concomitantly legitimises the work that

language activists do. Discourses of 'purity' and 'authenticity' that seek to document and preserve a pre-colonial language (for further examination by the academy) can serve as obstacles to language reclamation efforts that are still struggling to establish a sort of linguistic foothold for Indigenous language in colonial contexts.

5.3. Collaboration (together) in addition to cooperation (taking turns)

No one person alone learns a language (Rice 2009); each does a certain amount of work on their own, but actual use and application occurs within a social context. Reclamation means that we are not *just* learning language, but learning and re-building relationships in and through our Indigenous languages simultaneously. Applied to the tasks of linguistic documentation, why would we choose to do the bulk of transcription outside of that social network? Collaboration in academia is not the norm, but in the case of relationship building in a community, collaboration is called for. If transcription is also interpretation, or *cultural representation*, it seems essential that community members participate in this activity. These two counts, the need to build language learning in community relationships, and the need to transcribe with other community members (speakers and learners), build a case for documentation to shift from the model of 'expertise of an individual' to the idea of building expertise as distributed knowledge.

Evans (2010:218) comments that '[s]uccessful language documentation draws on and cross fertilizes the work of a wide range of people, and achieves the best results when it capitalizes on the different talents and motives that each brings to the task'. An illustration in our project came from working at the same time and same place on transcripts, a sort of 'transcription camp'. Working side-by-side with headphones, instead of alone at a computer, facilitated sharing resources (speakers' and our own differing knowledges of Ojibwe language and people). One transcriber/learner was working on revisions to a transcript. The text originally read:

(1) Zhaangweshi: a'aw ningozis ominwenimaan iwe
my son likes those

Niigaatikwe asserted that she did not hear the word for 'my son' (*ningozis*) in its supposed place within that stretch of talk. She also knew the grammar was inconsistent, namely that the pronoun for 'those' at the end of the utterance should have been animate (*iwe* is inanimate). Her linguistic knowledge made her aware that something was wrong, although she could not identify what was being said in the talk that the first transcription had identified as *ningozis*. At 'transcription camp', Niigaatikwe consulted with Waabishkiimiigwan (also

a transcriber and a close friend to Zhaangweshi). Waabishkiimiigwan immediately recognised the word in question as *Memengwesi*, the Ojibwe name of Zhaangweshi's grandson, someone she often talked about. In this example, the linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledges worked together. Her revision read:

(2) Zhaangweshi: a'aw Memengwesi ominwenimaan iniwe

Memengwesi likes those

Niigaatikwe noted that with this background information of who Memengwesi was to Zhaangweshi, the entire conversation made sense and other transcription issues were resolved easily as well.

Self-critique from the field of documentation exhorts linguists to 'collaborate' with consultants (Glenn 2009; Messineo 2008; Penfield & Tucker 2011); however, the nature of this idealised collaboration is still unresolved (Austin 2010). Dobrin et al. (2007:4) warn of the potential for working relationships to become commodified as 'transacted objects', and it is here that the distinction between *collaboration* (working together toward a shared goal) and *cooperation* (connected turn-taking toward individual goals) becomes visible. Collaboration was an integral part of the Ojibwe movies project from the start. It informed the project's design and shaped processes of data collection and analysis. While the money and legitimacy associated with the institutional power of the grant itself likely interfered in many ways, relationships that were built and strengthened among people and with the language itself over the five-year course of this project, came out of collaboration as well as cooperation.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we have shown how a collaborative Indigenous language documentation project grown *for*, *with* (Cameron et al. 1993), and *by* (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009) community efforts in language reclamation can shift the documentation paradigm to include divergent perspectives. The fields of documentation and reclamation have long supported one another, though not always for mutual benefit. In reclamation, we have seen that reciting memorised narratives (a favorite source text in documentation) has also become part of the methods of language teaching and learning. Similarly, reciting short introductory speeches, memorising word lists, and singing (all typical documentation outcomes) serve a variety of social and/or ceremonial functions. In an endangered language setting, it is easy to conflate the ability to recite from memory with spontaneous production,

especially by non-speakers. However, without spontaneous, meaning-focused exchanges of information and negotiation, the language can become a mere token for display, an outcome that is resisted by documentary linguists and revitalisers alike.

The contours of a discipline are not determined by one individual. Rather, they lie in the weaving together of layers of structures and meaning, or discursive practices which individuals choose to produce. What is considered legitimate in the field of documentary linguistics is being challenged by a significant shift in the priorities of the consumers of and participants in this field. Indigenous peoples, allied people, and our many cultures and perspectives that go beyond the genealogy of academics, are attempting to shift these boundaries. With each new project, documentary linguists have an opportunity to examine their positions, asking: *whose ideas inform this project?*, *who is the audience?*, and *who and what are involved in the process?* Besides focusing on the project's outcomes, researchers can have conversations about the design of a documentation project with the community before it begins, orienting it toward collaboration rather than cooperative exchange (see, e.g., Yamada 2011, 2014). Collaboration need not sideline methodologies of linguistics or curb academic output; rather, it offers linguists and collaborative partners opportunities to discover new ways of asking questions, negotiating puzzles, and re-envisioning an 'endangered' language as a singularly vibrant, dynamic, and complex social practice.

Given the larger context of academic research and Indigenous peoples, many forms of participatory research are currently becoming understood as legitimate (in terms of academic standards) and valuable (in terms of opening up educational opportunities for underserved communities). We cannot ignore the role research has had in exploitation (Hermes 1998; Medin & Bang 2014; Smith 2012) and the deficit model toward our own Indigenous knowledges (see, e.g., Brayboy 2005; Dyke & Hermes, forthcoming). Given this broader political context, we offer general guidelines below, which are really 'challenges' that push back against such colonial forces. These are not regulations, they are not easy to do, and they may not yield more funding. This is why we frame them as 'challenges'; they are guidelines that will challenge individual researchers to engage in internal and external relationship work that is difficult, but that from our perspective is a move toward social justice.

Guidelines as Challenges for Scholars Creating Documentation Projects

1. Share leadership and skills.
Documentation grants often need PhDs to write and submit. Whenever possible, collaborate from the onset, the design stage of conceiving the project (Hermes, Bang & Marin 2014; Linn 2014) with a member or members of the speech community. This necessitates relationship building, which may take years to achieve but it is necessary. Eliminate 'the one "expert" to rule them all' philosophy. An expert in applied linguistics is not necessarily an expert in endangered language *learning*.

2. Recognise fluidity and allow schedule changes.
Saying *a priori* what will happen, and when, is a trap of grant writing and academic planning. What actually happens in the moment is very important to respond to. Dictating a schedule and structure is a way to control the process. This can block the ability to see new research questions, synchronistic opportunities, or being able to take time to really listen (in English often!) to what a speaker is trying to say. Have some flexibility in your schedule; leave time for visiting, relationship building, and spontaneous combustion. Tolerance for ambiguity is a skill.

3. Practice reciprocity and recognise the 'expert' syndrome of the university professor.
Training is now offered in documentation skills to community members. These are good opportunities for many people to learn recording, transcribing, data management, etc. Add in power. Ask what the trainers have to learn from the Indigenous language speakers in the training? Can this learning go two ways so it does not reinforce the deficit model associated with American Indians? There is a wealth of knowledge and perspective about the languages themselves that goes unmentioned. How is Whiteness at work here? Expertise does not just flow one way. Universities tend to create individuals who hold expertise. Language reclamation is an exercise in distributed cognition. This means recognising that there are other relevant expert knowledges at hand, although they may not be readily apparent to an outsider. Learn about something that you have never considered important, as this is truly the paradigm shifting moment. Radically expand your notion of what 'text collection' could be (Himmelmann 2004:2).

4. Stay with it and build relationships.
Long term relationships with researchers in communities are usually more mutually beneficial than short ones. Starting to learn a language and build relationships takes effort. Think about how you 'choose' a language to work on; what does that mean for making relationships with the people and their language? It often strikes us that for those who are highly committed to reclamation, many are well beyond identity politics and are just looking for committed individuals with a variety of skills.

Lessons from *Ojibwe Conversations* extend beyond the work of the linguist and into the broader academy itself. As other linguists have noted, funding and professional legitimacy are tied to the projects undertaken in the field (Dobrin et al. 2007; Warner, Luna & Butler 2007). Thus, institutions and funding agencies have an obligation to respond to the lessons of their own research: documentation without a purpose of reclamation only 'saves' the essentialist ideas of Indigenous languages as fixed, pre-colonial phenomena. This is not a rejection of descriptive and documentary practices, however. As we have shown here, it is quite the contrary; the tools and methodologies of linguistics can be of great value to language reclamation work. However, Rice's (2009:45) assertion that 'the tradition of linguistic description has its own culture and values, one that does not necessarily intersect with that of local communities', highlights the need for a paradigm shift in documentation. As linguists and funders seek to expand upon the ways in which they can respond to the urgency of dwindling languages, prioritising community objectives and collaborative projects can put the emphasis on reclamation rather than notions of 'authenticity'.

Postscript by Hermes

I forgot about those eagles until I came back home, and then I heard them outside of my window. Giant wings extended. Every time I drive through Siren, Wisconsin, past the Chattering Squirrel I remember meeting Biidaanikwad. An 'Indian-famous' linguist, we affectionately call his dictionary 'the bible'. I emailed him out of the blue. And to my surprise, he responded. In fact he drove two hours out of the city to a remote location to meet me, a complete stranger. Just did it, as if this was something he was used to doing. 'Hey wanna do this thing with me [write a grant]?' I asked him, full front faced naiveté. 'Sure', was his response. That was the start of our documentation grant. He is still an Indian-famous linguist, but now I know how deceiving looks can be. He appears to be the best of linguists and a White academic. In a fuller version of the truth, he is a family member to the people he has worked with and has many layers to his identity, like most of us. Good things come from reaching across our differences. Giant wings extended.

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Appendix A

Naanan (5)

Morning Movies: "*They like to sleep!*"

Target vocabulary:

goshkozi, nibaa, onishkaa, ozhitoon, minikwe

Overview

Day 5 begins with a review of vocabulary via embodiment (TPR) and some speaking. The majority of the class period is dedicated to an interactive classroom survey activity.

Objectives

- Students will be able to embody the meanings of the target vocabulary
- Students will begin to familiarize themselves with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular conjugations.
- Students will be able to ask *Ina?* (Yes/No) questions of one another and they will be able to answer accurately.

Prep + Materials

- 5 Naanan TPR Script[1]
- 5 Handout: Ginibaa na? (1 for each student)
- Notecards, each containing 1 verb on it (teacher makes these)

Lesson Plan

(1) 10 minutes **TPR Warm-Up**

Use the language from 5 Naanan TPR Script to help the students reconnect with familiar language:

- *goshkozi* (s/he wakes up),
- *minikwe* (s/he drinks something),
- *nibaa* (s/he sleeps),
- *onishkaa* (s/he gets up),
- *ozhitoon* (s/he makes something).

Ina?

There is no direct English translation for the Ojibwe word *ina*. This is technically referred to as a "discourse particle," and it works as a question word to indicate that the speaker is asking a yes/no question.

Ina is always placed as the second word in a sentence no matter how many other words are in that same sentence. Look at these examples from the Ojibwe People's Dictionary[2]:

- Giinitamawind **ina** giga-o-bawa'aamin manoomin?
  (Is it our turn to go knock rice?)
- Geget **ina**?
  (Is that right?)

As you can see, no matter how many words there are in a question sentence, *ina* goes second. For both of these examples, you could answer with a simple *eya'* (yes) or *gaawiin* (no).

[1] If you are already comfortable with the language and conjugations of this lesson, the script is not needed.
[2] http://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/

(2) 35 minutes total

Ginibaa na? (use *Ginibaa na? Handout 1)*
This is a 3-part question-and-answer survey task for students to practice speaking and listening with one another.

There are many ways to introduce this activity and teachers can modify it to fit the needs of their own learners.

(*15 minutes*)

Introduction
We recommend scaffolding this activity from the beginning by using the grid on the first page to talk about conjugations.

- distribute the *Ginibaa na (half blank)* handout to your students.
- Give them 5 minutes to work with a partner - see if they can deduce any patterns and fill out the grid in pairs.
- After 5 minutes, give the students a chance to explain to the class how they came by their answers.
- Review the answers as a whole class.

(*15 minutes*)

Survey
Students should turn their attention to the second page - the blank grid for collecting "survey data". The teacher distributes a notecard with a verb in its root form (ex.: *onishkaa)* to each student - to tell them what they are "doing". The students' task is to figure out what everyone else is doing by asking "*ina*?" or yes/no questions to collect the answers.

Example…
Student 1 (holding *goshkozi* card)
Student 2 (holding *ozhitoon* card)

S1: Ginibaa na?
Are you sleeping?
S2: Gaawiin. Indoozhitoon.
No. I am making it.
Giminikwe na?
Are you drinking?
S1: Gaawiin. Nigoshkoz.
No. I am waking up.

At this point, the students can move on to ask other classmates, collecting more "data".

(*5 minutes*)

Closing
At the end of the class period, the teacher should go over the survey data with the entire class to see that everyone's data matches.

Scaffolding

In teaching, we often use the metaphor of scaffolding to illustrate instruction that is tailored to the needs of our learners. These "supports" are temporary and can take many forms.

In language classes, scaffolding can be anything from the use of a dictionary to gestures to language examples.

In the case of the activity here, scaffolding is provided in the introduction by giving students some language models (the grid squares that are filled in) and a partner to work with.

Remember that learners can learn from each other. Even though they may be at "the same level", they may have different strengths and weaknesses, and they can help fill in the gaps for one another.