

Native Language Education: An Inquiry Into What Is and What Could Be

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The objective of my honors thesis study was to explore the current state of K-12 and postsecondary Native language (NL) education in Canada and to examine the possibilities of incorporating outdoor education with NL programs. This qualitative research project explored this objective through focus group sessions and individual interviews. Learner and Educator participants were queried about their experiences, values, and ideas about Native language education. Twenty-two Aboriginal adults participated in my study, and results pointed to a number of conclusions: (a) learners appear to wish to increase their Native language skills; (b) educators appear to be interested in working toward reaching educational ideals; (c) much work remains to revitalize Native languages in Canada; and (d) gaps in Native language programming suggest opportunities to develop and implement more Native language programs including the incorporation of outdoor education.

Preface

Anishnaabemowin zhinkaade Gizhe-Manidoo gaa-miizhid waa-nitaagziyaanh. Ngii-waabandaan genii ji-kinoomaagenyaambaa awi Anishnaabemowin. Gaa-bikinoomaageyaanh, eshkam go gii-kendaagwad waa-kinoomaageyaanh gaawii giidibendaagsinoo biindig miinwaa oodenaang eta ji-kenjigaadegba awi. Mii dash maanda nda-kendmaa agojing/akiing gewii ji-kenjigaadeg Anishnaabemowin.

This article is written in the first person, which represents the voice of the first author. The Great Spirit gave me the Anishinaabe language to be heard with. This gift inspired me to teach my Native language. As I taught, my teaching topics began to lead me to consider the outdoor environment as a potential educational setting for Native language instruction. This motivation has led me to explore the possibilities of Native language instruction in an outdoor setting. I thus enrolled in Lakehead University's Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism program to learn the logistics of managing programs in the outdoors.

Introduction

I became a Native language instructor to regain my Anishinaabemowin fluency as being a teacher necessitated me to use the language. I taught in Toronto, Ontario, beginning with adult learners. I then taught grades 7 to 10 followed by time spent teaching at the college level before teaching preschool students. These experiences as a learner and teacher have in part

led me to the queries that I make in reference to this study, which represents my honors thesis study for the Outdoor Recreation, Parks, and Tourism program at Lakehead University for the 2005-2006 year.

Research Objectives

My main query was to explore the current state of Native language (NL) education at the K-12 and postsecondary levels in Canada. My purpose was to determine the possibilities of broadening NL programs into an outdoor setting.

The following objectives helped guide my research.

1. To explore how NL instruction may or may not be valued by Elders, teachers, students, parents/families, and First Nations communities as a whole;
2. To explore the physical settings (indoors and outdoors) in which NL education is currently being taught at the K-12 and postsecondary levels and to discover the variety of cultural content in this forum;
3. To find examples of challenges to delivering NL education due to limitations such as funding formula from governmental education departments.

Although the exploration of NL instruction can involve a broad range of findings, and given the time constraints of the academic year, my study is focused on finding evidence of Native language programs that have included the Elders and the outdoors into their courses. This idea came to me as I realized that much of the Native language can be learned in the outdoor environment through the participation of Native life skills activities. Thus the goal of this thesis is to consider the educative possibilities of an emphasis on land-based Native language education.

Literature Review

This literature review provides a brief overview of the background and recent developments for NL education in Canada. The main focus of the literature review is to identify NL models that integrate the outdoors as an aspect of the educational environment. NL programs exist in various institutions and communities throughout Canada. Evidence suggests that these programs for K-12 students are insufficient to sustain Native languages (Assembly of First Nations, 1992; Burns, 1998; Corbiere, 2000; Kirkness, 1998; McAlpine & Herodier, 1994). A few examples of current innovative NL programs are included in this review of literature to identify what has been achieved for Native language education.

Initiatives to revitalize Canada's diminishing Native languages and to reclaim Native education gained strength in 1972 with the National Indian Brotherhood's document entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education* (Tschanz, 1980). First Nations people have realized that the NL programs in schools were not enough to keep Native languages flourishing. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN, 1992), published a report *Towards Rebirth*

of *First Nations Languages* to help protect, promote, and revitalize Native languages. The AFN report demonstrated a need for First Nations schools to go beyond current educational practices to deliver ideal NL programs. Kirkness (1998) also expressed concern about the decline of Canada's Indigenous languages, reinforcing her belief in the need to include them in the school system. She simultaneously cautioned that NL programs in the system might result in pedagogical discord, asserting:

We are uncomfortable when too much time is spent outdoors learning from the land, because we have been conditioned to believe that education occurs in the classroom. We continue to adhere to the established school year even when it doesn't suit the life of the community. (p. 13)

Kirkness argues for the importance of involving the Elders as they, possess the wisdom and knowledge that must be the focus of all our learning. It is through them we can understand the unique relationship to the Creator, our connection with nature, the order of things, and the values that enhance the identity of our people. (p. 13)

In the school system there is pedagogical discord in teaching native languages because they may not adequately develop the Native languages functionally. Corbiere (2000) found that Ontario's overly prescriptive standardized curriculum creates incongruence to the Aboriginal world view. In other words, the current curriculum tends to be a structuralist-grammatical approach (e.g., verbs, plurals, and tenses) versus a whole-language approach that does not facilitate First Nations schools whose goals for their programs are social-cultural in nature. To improve the Native language situation, Corbiere suggests that the conduits of Native epistemology (philosophy that deals with the origin, nature, and limits of knowledge)—the land, the Elders, the stories, the animals, the spiritual messengers, and the interconnectedness of the natural world—need to be reintegrated into the school environment.

Battiste (2000) also provides a case for language, culture, and Aboriginal identity in mainstream educational systems. She reports:

[Native languages are] the basic media for the transmission and survival of Aboriginal consciousness, cultures ... values ... These languages are a direct and powerful means of understanding the legacy of tribal knowledge. They provide deep and lasting cognitive bonds that affect all aspects of Aboriginal life. (p. 199)

Battiste also advocates the critical role of Elders to Aboriginal language transmission and Aboriginal epistemology by proclaiming, "Taking schooling out into the bush and bringing elders into the classroom are two ways in which First Nation schools have enriched the knowledge not only of students but also of teachers" (p. 201). To promote self-efficacy, Battiste suggests that if Aboriginal communities wish to maintain flexibility and control of their own education, they must remain outside the arena of provincial administrative regulations.

Whereas Kirkness (1998), Corbiere (2000), and Battiste (2000) tackle the school system for the Native language cause, Kawagley (2000) brings a cultural perspective to the situation. Kawagley makes his case with an excerpt of a Yupiaq loon story, "The loon ... can help us to understand ourselves and see our connection to Mother Earth today. It has its own language and is understood by others of its kind and other creatures" (p. 101). With this in mind, Kawagley adds, "Our Native languages come from the land. They are derived from the land. It is the language of the land that makes our Native people live in harmony with nature" (p. 101). In order to forge ahead with NL challenges, Kawagley reminds us, "the loon never lost its spiritual vision. It has a love for life, its environment and its creator. Its education was from Mother Earth" (p. 102). Stories such as this serve to guide our paths and to carry our teachings, our cultures, and our languages. The loon story that transposes legend to real life is an example of bringing Native culture into the formal educational context.

There thus appears to be some evidence of the need for Native languages to be included in the school system to achieve ideal learning outcomes despite criticisms of pedagogical shortcomings. Supporters of NL instruction (Kirkness, 1998; Corbiere, 2000; Battiste, 2000) have offered some suggestions about how to build on the deficit of NL programs. These are discussed in the following section.

Native Language Program Models

Examples of Native language program models include home schooling (Eshkibok-Trudeau, 2000); multi-community initiatives (McAlpine & Herodier, 1994), extensive single-community strategies (Ross, 2000); NL immersion programs (Eshkibok-Trudeau); bilingual programming (McAlpine & Herodier); individual instruction (Eshkibok-Trudeau); larger community domains (Moore, 2003); the role of Elders (Sterling, 2000); and the land as teacher (Butler, 2004; Marker, 2004). I discuss the role of language/culture immersion programs and follow with a summary of some of the challenges of implementing NL pedagogy in schools. In my view, although they are a limited number of published sources, these models do provide some compelling examples of incorporating alternative pedagogies with NL education.

Eshkibok-Trudeau (2000) chose to immerse her child in the Anishinaabe language and culture through home schooling. Because the schools in the family's community did not provide the traditional Anishinaabe teachings Eshkibok-Trudeau wanted her daughter to know, she opted for the home schooling alternative pedagogy. The Eshkibok-Trudeau home school model is one example of NL education that has come into being through individual action. Unfortunately, this was the only example of current home schooling that I have found, so it cannot be determined how effective this was.

Evidence does exist of how multiple communities can collaborate to develop their own Aboriginal education system. McAlpine and Herodier (1994) provide an example about a group of nine Cree communities around the James Bay region who began their bilingual programs in 1988. McAlpine and Herodier found that "Aboriginal communities that control their own schools often perceive schooling as a means of halting the erosion of language and restoring the viability of their culture" (p. 128). The James Bay Cree used a descending bilingual program in which the pupils began their education in full Cree immersion, then gradually shifted to more English as they progressed to higher grades.

The Cree have experienced challenges in achieving their NL goals including the lack of written Cree resources, not enough Cree language teachers at the secondary level, and funding issues that limit effective delivery of programs (McAlpine & Herodier, 1994). McAlpine and Herodier's example demonstrates that a collaborative effort by a group of First Nations communities can achieve control for NL education.

At the other end of the spectrum, a single community was able to accomplish a variety of programs that included Native language as an important component for their students' education. The Cross Lake First Nation of Manitoba initiated a range of educational programs that included various aspects of NL education. Ross (2000) details this Cree community's initiatives that began in 1988. Key examples of Cross Lake's education system include Cree language maintenance; cultural programming; and a wilderness camp for outdoor education purposes (Ross, 2000). At the community level, Cross Lake's educational goals and objectives included teaching about traditional lifestyle, natural environment, skills-based activities, use of community resources, and some bilingual programming.

The Cross Lake community believes that the education levels of their students have increased since they took control (Ross, 2000). I find that the Cross Lake initiative provides one example of what NL education can be for other First Nations communities that seek to strengthen their languages and their programs, particularly those programs wishing to include the outdoors as part of their pedagogy.

It is also possible to collaborate in a partnership with an Aboriginal community and a mainstream institution to institute the Native language education, its Elders, and the outdoor environment. Moore (2003) writes about several NL programs that became possible at the postsecondary level. One such program is the Kaska NL course where Elders participated in teaching the Kaska Native language and traditional skills at a University of British Columbia summer course in 2002. The program used mentor pedagogy where the language learners were paired with fluent speakers. This facilitated continued learning of the language beyond the structure of the course. Moore found that, "Community-based courses such as this

provide recognition to Elders for their knowledge and their role as language teachers" (p. 133). Moore acknowledges that there were program challenges including safety, registration, accommodations, and the impromptu development of learning materials. Unfortunately, Moore does not provide information on the level of fluency acquired in this situation. This gap in information may suggest that more studies can be made to address this issue. In my view, if other Canadian universities could be as progressive as this BC example, which recognizes Elders' values for NL education, then more NL programs like this may be possible.

The formal education system values its educators who have a certain level of qualifications to teach in their institutions. For Aboriginal societies, Elders are the cultural, spiritual, and language experts, and increasingly their epistemologies are being revived and their role as rich sources of knowledge for language and cultural transmission is being restored. Sterling (2002) studied two Nlakapamux Elders in BC who teach through stories and activities in the outdoor environment. Sterling found that,

The land provided the food and shelter, and Nature was the textbook, providing the content of Nlakapamux learning. Cultural knowledge provided the wisdom for establishing a healthy relationship with the environment and the processes for making a living from the land, then transmitting that knowledge to the next generation. (p. 8)

In my opinion, there is clear evidence that it is important to include Elders in an outdoor NL program, especially if traditional skills are to be taught and passed on to future generations. With the inclusion of Elders in NL much can be learned about the land, which also is a teacher (Tobias, 2000).

Numerous people have identified that the land plays an important role in Native language education. Marker (2004) explains, "This emphasis on relationships puts animals, plants, and landscapes in the active role of teacher and therefore results in a more holistic and integrated understanding of phenomena" (p. 106). Marker's argument for the land-as-teacher idea may already have been realized by Butler (2004), who found that research can assist a Native community in integrating its traditional ecological knowledge in the requirements of a local school system. The Gitxaala community of BC has emphasized that its children learn their language, history, and traditions in school (Butler). First Nations communities can find ways to maintain their Native languages, especially in the realm of the natural outdoor environment and their schools, but one pervasive issue is funding. I say more about funding in the following *Challenges* section.

Language Immersion Programs

The above examples provide a brief overview of some of the Native language programs that have attempted to embed the acquisition of language in a cultural context that is congruent with what is being taught. In this next section I mention the results of several studies that have ex-

amined language immersion programs in which the cultural context is mainstream. In this section I highlight the differences between those language programs in which the target language (e.g., Cree) is being taught in a cultural context that does not match that of the language (English cultural context) versus those programs where the language program is being taught in a mainstream context (e.g., English cultural context where French is being taught and the culture is mainstream).

There is little question that during the past 40 years there have been significant shifts in how language educators have viewed context (Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, & Colby, 2000). The research generally supports the hypothesis that language proficiency is enhanced by studying a given language in that language's country of origin (Dyson, 1988). Other studies have shown that the protective setting of a classroom that is embedded in a context that is mainstream for most students actually enables students to safely experiment with learning a language (Mitchell, 1988; Kramsch, 1993).

Ellis (1992) argues that the discourse and learning produced depend on the roles employed by the teacher and learner, the tasks and tools that are used in the classroom, and the learning objectives. Freed (1991) confirms that the crucial variables may not be the external environment but the internal one created by the type of classroom instruction and the classroom environment. This, of course, does not mean that the cultural context is not important. It is the interaction between external and internal context that dictates the type of learning that will occur.

The implicit Western bias and dissociation from the cultural context characteristic of much Native language instruction programs, as discussed above, may present less of an issue for other language immersion programs. When fear of being assimilated into the target culture and anxiety about the teacher who is representative of that culture are not central to the process of language acquisition, then the process of learning a language may be less problematic even if the cultural context is not congruent with the language being taught (Ferdman, 1990).

Effective acquisition of a language and that language's culture in English as a second language (ESL) or French immersion programs, for example, depends on several teacher variables, the classroom environment, instructional methods, and curricular methods (Paige et al., 2000). Native language educators may continue to be challenged in their attempts to bridge the pedagogical discord that exists between language instruction and context (Battiste, 2000; Corbiere, 2000; Kirkness, 1998), but they may also have something to learn from those language immersion programs that have examined the role of the teacher and the classroom environment as contributing factors to students' acquisition of language.

Clearly the question of context is significant as it relates to language acquisition. Before presenting the results from this present study, I present some additional challenges related to Native language instruction.

Challenges for NL Education

A number of challenges to implementing NL education are identified above, including the lack of written resources, too few language instructors at the secondary level, issues of safety and risk management, and others. The following section briefly outlines some additional challenges, including funding issues and challenges related to self-governance.

If Aboriginal people wish to expand their pedagogies to include more Elders and more outdoor educational settings, money represents another challenge in manifesting this ideal. Burns (1998) explains why the issue of funding makes it difficult for ideal NL programs to be realized. According to Burns, when the government provides educational funding, they often dictate the educational framework by which this funding can be accessed. This framework is often composed of educational goals and objectives that are based on Eurocentric values that are not ideal for NL education. The ideal situation should instill a "spirit of Native control of Native education, self determination, self-government, and the sovereignty of First Nations" (p. 58). Burns recommends that, "The provincial school boards can ... include curricular and instructional practices, organizational practices, linguistic issues and practices, Native personnel equity, school culture, school/community involvement and relations, and educational outcome equity" (p. 64) that would give Aboriginals greater control of their education. Burns' discussion of this matter addresses tuition agreements, tuition negotiations, and schooling. His arguments are relevant to this present study because these issues affect the possibilities for increased NL programming.

Another challenge is related to self-governance. First Nations people have been striving to become more self-governing to regain their sovereignty and autonomy. Currently, through the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI, 2005), First Nations communities in southern and eastern Ontario are collaborating in an Anishinabek Nation Jurisdiction of Education Plan. Relevant objectives of this plan include the strategy to revitalize the Anishinaabe language and to set a foundation for curriculum development with an Anishinaabe educational philosophy. The education restoration project is currently in progress, and the outcomes cannot yet be assessed. This political/governance action is relevant to this study because it is one factor that affects the possibilities for an ideal NL education.

The literature reviewed provides a brief overview of some models of NL programs in the K-12 and postsecondary settings. It highlights the idea that Native language instruction needs to move beyond the classroom setting by including Elders and the outdoor environment as important contextual considerations. Progress and challenges have affected the

delivery of NL programs (e.g., lack of materials, lack of funds to acquire or develop materials, insufficient time allotments for NL instruction, confining teaching to the indoor environment). The following section details the research I conducted to find first-hand experiences about Native language education.

Methods

This section includes a summary of the study design, instrumentation, participant selection and recruitment, research procedure, and analysis of the data. The data I collected were about the experiences and thoughts of the participants to identify trends and possibilities for NL education. I designed a set of questions for three types of participants: learners (current NL students), educators (NL teachers or those involved with Native education), and interested community members (neither current NL students or NL educators but interested in the topic).

In qualitative research two strategies to collect data from the participants include focus groups and individual interviews (Berg, 2004). The focus group format that I used for learner data collection can provide a forum where data can be collected that are rich in content, involve numerous participants, and require a relatively short time frame. I used the individual interview method for the educators because I believed that the data I would collect from them would be more substantive than what would come out of a focus group setting. I used a semistructured approach to the interviews, thus allowing me some flexibility with the quality and the level of qualitative feedback offered by participants (Berg). The focus group method was again used for the interested community member participants.

The focus group and interviews began with four value and experience questions that pertained to participants' past and current NL learning or teaching experiences. The intent of the study was to explore the current state of Native language instruction (*what is*) alongside what *could be* if the Native language instruction were ideal. These initial interview questions thus addressed the first part of this study (what is the present or current state in NL education). The next two questions were designed to acquire participants' ideas for an ideal NL learning or teaching experience. These responses would represent what could be, the future or possibilities for NL education. The final question provided participants with an opportunity to present any additional thoughts on the topic.

Participants

I needed at least 10 participants for my research. My list of potential participants had some connection to NL education; therefore, this population represented a purposive sample (Berg, 2004). I first determined if the participant was a learner, an educator, or an interested community member. All study participants were Aboriginal adults residing in Thunder

Bay. The learners were current or former students of a Native language program. The educators represented a broad spectrum of Aboriginal education-related professionals. Their work experiences varied from elementary to postsecondary levels, from on-reserve to off-reserve educational environments, and from NL instructors to department chairs. Subsequently, the interested community members (four participants) were more representative of NL students, and the data that I collected from them was integrated into the learners matrix. Table 1 provides an overview of the participants' characteristics.

Procedure

Before I could conduct my research, the study had to be approved by my thesis advisor and the program's research ethics committee. My research documents included a research proposal, a letter to participants, interview questions, affirmation of following ethical research standards, and the consent form. After I received approval, I planned and arranged meeting times and locations for the focus group sessions and individual interviews. Sessions were held at Lakehead University, in educators' homes, and in a community-based NL program. I successfully conducted four focus group sessions and seven interviews during January 2006 totaling 22 study participants. Materials to conduct the research included handouts of the questions, letters to the participants, the consent form, a tape-recorder, and refreshments.

Analysis

The purpose of analysis in qualitative research is to carefully detail, systematically examine, and interpret the data collected (Berg, 2004). I imported the interview transcripts to the Atlas.ti software, demo version, which computes qualitative research data. This software allows for quoting, coding, and charting. Next I grouped the codes into learner or educator categories and then divided the codes to show experiences and

Table 1
Participants' Characteristics

Number of learners	15			
Number of educators	7			
Number of males	11			
Number of females	11			
Age range and number	18-30 years	31-50 years	51+ years	
	4	13	5	
Tribal affiliations and number	*Anishinaabe	Sto:lo	Inuit	Mohawk
	19	1	1	1

*Anishinaabe comprises Ojibwa, Cree, Algonquin, and Salteaux as their languages are similar.

possibilities for NL education. I also sorted these findings into positive and negative experiences and tangible or intangible findings.

Results

Twenty-two Aboriginal learners and educators participated in my study. Table 2 summarizes the interests of the participants. I used the Atlas.ti software to group the data into themes. I grouped learner and educator data separately.

What Is—The Present for NL Education

The educators’ views are listed on the left side of Figure 1 and the learners views on the right. The top portion of the figure represents the participants’ past or current *positive* responses to their experiences in NL education. The bottom portion of the figure enumerates their *negative* experiences. Another column groups the educators’ experiences. The top left column represents positive *tangible* experiences, and the top right column lists *intangible* experiences. The bottom left section represents negative experiences with the *intangible* experiences being in the far left column and the *tangible* experiences in the inner column. The center codes at the top middle and lower middle represent common experiences of both educators and learners.

What Could Be—The Future for NL Education

The future (Figure 2) is also a combination of the learners’ and educators views. From the top left of the figure moving to the right are: *tangibles* that need to be settled to achieve an ideal NL education; NL educational work needs to go on for *future learners; educators* (including a brief list of additional human resources needed to enrich NL programs); and *class size* (which was identified as a factor that influenced an ideal teaching or learning environment). The bottom labels (left to right) refer to *intangibles*

Table 2
Most-Recurring Codes

Code	Total	Learners		Educators	
		Female	Male	Female	Male
Culture	7	1	1	4	1
Curriculum	7	2		5	
Advancement	5	2		1	2
Family	5	1	2	1	1
Individual	5	1	4		
Materials	5			4	1
Setting	5	—	—	3	2
Children	4	1	2	1	—
Immersion	4	—	1	2	2

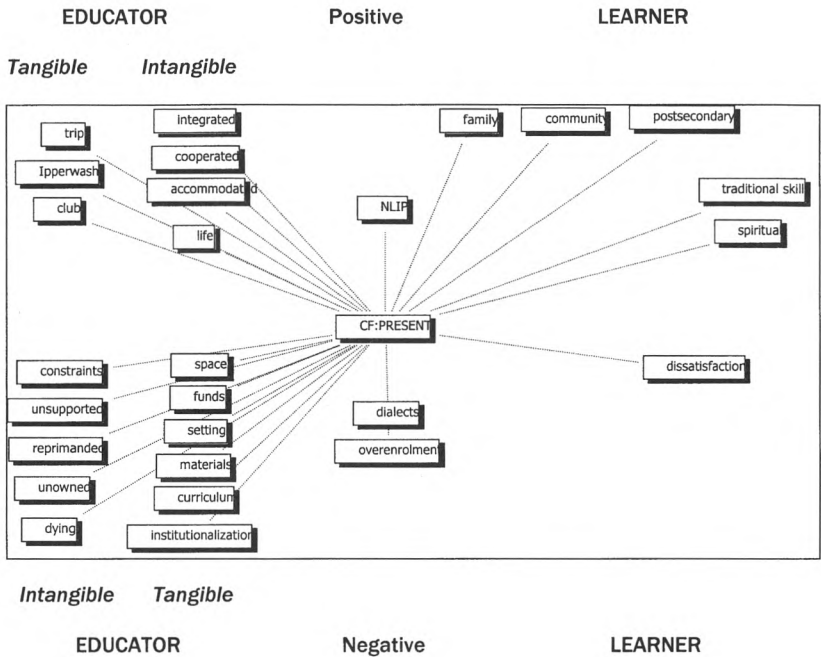


Figure 1. What is—the present.

that influence satisfaction with NL education, *epistemology*, and *pedagogy* (which identifies recommended ways to learn and teach NL).

Results Conclusion

In my enthusiasm to find data that might refer to an ideal outdoor NL program, I initially combined the ideas in a separate figure (Figure 2) that I show in the *Discussion* section. The results do not represent an exhaustive list of experiences and ideas on the topic as it is based only on the data I collected for my study.

Discussion

I explored the topic of Native language (NL) education in Canada to find out about the current situation, *what is*, from the literature reviewed and from conducting focus groups and interviews with 22 Aboriginal learner and educator participants. I also explored what *could be* for NL with a focus on outdoor education. I briefly review the literature and discuss the findings from my study data. First, the vitality of Native languages is in a critical state in Canada (Kirkness, 1998), and to rectify this situation Aboriginals lobbied to have them integrated into the school system. Various models of existing NL programs are under threat and operate

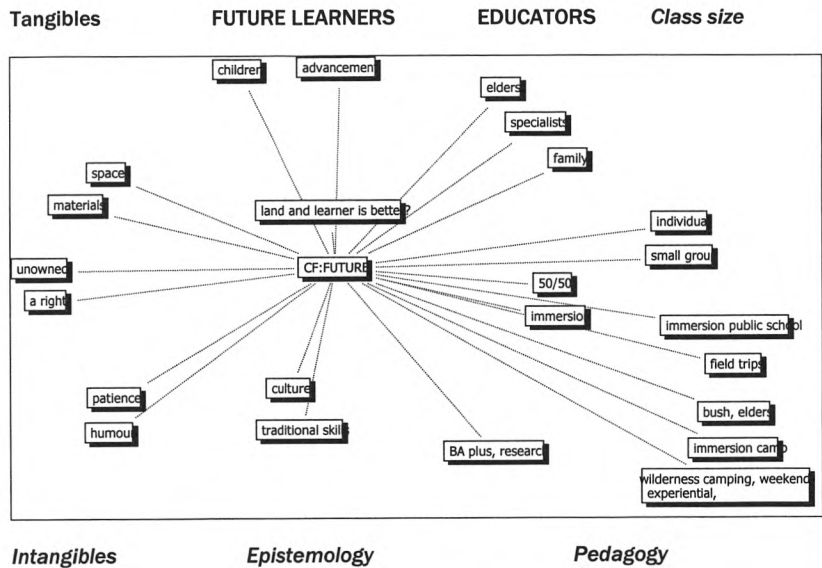


Figure 2. What could be—the future.

with numerous challenges (e.g., lack of teaching materials, lack of funds, lack of NL instructors, AFN, 1992; Burns, 1998).

In my study many of these issues (materials, space, funds) resonated with the educators' responses in both the K-12 and postsecondary NL programs. Although Corbiere (2000) mentioned that the structuralist-grammatic approach does not educate students to communicate effectively in the language, none of the participants in my study mentioned this issue. This does not mean that it is not a problem; it is possible that the questions I asked did not provoke this response from the participants. I looked at various NL programs and some arguments for Native education to be improved. The NL instructors who participated in my study were familiar with the standard classroom setting and provincially or institutionally guided courses. They had minimal experiences teaching NL in the outdoor setting except for the few field trips mentioned. Generally I found that NL education continues to be an issue that needs to be improved for all its stakeholders based on educators' responses from my study and from the literature reviewed.

As for the learners, they mainly spoke about their recent or current NL experiences, which were at the postsecondary level. As for ideal NL learning experiences, learners reported that individual instruction or small groups and a more informal learning environment were the preferred modes of instruction. My review of the literature, except for Eshkibok-Trudeau's (2000) home schooling model, did not explore these details in

much depth. Neither did the learners mention experiences related to outdoor education in NL. Because learners were aware of the intent of my study, I had anticipated that they would have had more to report about outdoor education. In retrospect, perhaps I could have asked them about this, but I kept my NL questions relatively general. My overall conclusion for the learners' current experience in NL was that they had received NL education from what was available to them and outdoor education may not have been available.

What Could Be—Possibilities for NL Education

I am interested in an outdoor NL educational setting, so I looked for literature about the outdoor environment from an Aboriginal perspective including Elders as teachers (Kawagley, 2000; Moore, 2003; Ross, 2000; Sterling, 2002). The learners minimally considered this perspective, as they seemed to be more concerned with meeting their immediate learning needs in NL. At least three educators broached what NL could look like if it were offered in an outdoor environment. Both groups suggested full immersion or bilingual programs. Based on the findings, I produced Figure 3, which represents some criteria for an ideal outdoor NL program. In my enthusiasm for these findings, I was too quick to input these data, so

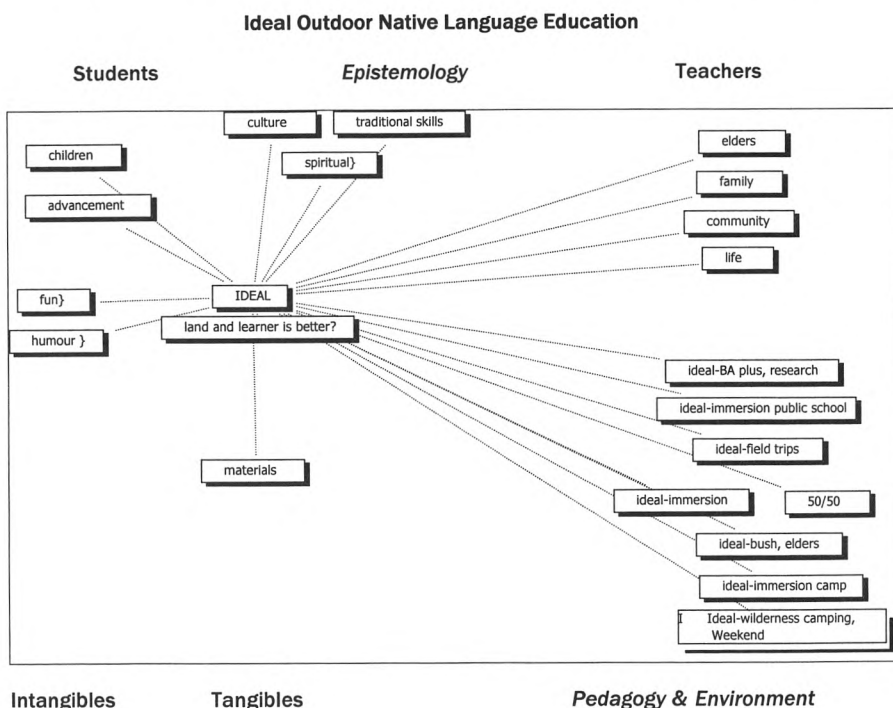


Figure 3. Ideal outdoor NL education.

I mixed the learners' and educators' responses and had to leave the figure as it is.

Ideal Outdoor NL Education

The Ideal NL (Figure 3) is organized as follows. From the top left of the diagram are *students'* considerations including *who* and *why*. The *epistemology* section denotes some ideal goals and objectives, and the top right side lists the teachers who could enrich NL education with their expertise. In the bottom section are *intangible* or intrinsic values of learning; the lower middle section constitutes the *tangibles* (e.g., the physical necessities for delivering a program) and the bottom right side indicates *pedagogy and environment* (the teaching methods and setting of an ideal program).

Limitations

The demo version of the Atlas.ti software limited my output of quotations (100) and codes (50) that came from the participant data. This limitation required me to scrutinize which data effectively responded to my study questions and research objectives. Also, the code limitation also provoked me to use codes that met multiple purposes. These codes are words that describe tangible (e.g., teaching materials) and intangible values (e.g., dissatisfaction), experiences, and NL possibilities from the participants.

Further Research

This is an original study. I found few studies that addressed outdoor education as a component of NL education for the K-12 or postsecondary levels. Below are some of my ideas and recommendations for future studies.

- Conduct another inventory of all Native language programs, which would present an update of the situation. This inventory should include on-reserve, off-reserve, First Nations-controlled, ministry-controlled, preschool to postsecondary to community-based, NSL, bilingual, and immersion programs;
- Compare varying NL models that can serve as templates for future developments.

In my view, to realize an ideal NL education, many logistics must be considered to make a successful program. Determination and action may make an idea into reality. Continued lobbying for Native control of Native education for NL and other educational ideals will help us realize our goals sooner rather than later.

Conclusion

Native language vitality is still precarious in Canada despite some efforts to institute NL programs to maintain it (AFN, 1992; Battiste, 2000; Kirkness, 1998). Schools at all levels are a resource for learning and teaching NL, but school programs are not enough to reestablish and maintain Native languages (Corbiere, 2000). NL needs to be reintegrated into

people's lives more fully. Considering the cultural context in which Native language is taught may help First Nations people regain our own sounds that the Great Spirit gave to us to use. Although some examples of Native language instruction are being incorporated into an outdoor environment (Moore, 2003; Ross, 2000), these have not been systematically studied. There is clearly a need for future empirical studies to examine the efficacy of such programs.

Entwek go gekinoomaagaazjig dawendaanaawaa ji-kendmowaad waazhi-Nish-naabemwaad miinwaa e-kinoomaageyig dibaajmowag niibna temgad giyaabi waa nankiing ji-mino-zhiwebag maanda gaa-miingoozying gidoo-nawewinminaa. Aambe getnaamzidaa.

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