

Introduction

Since 1994, the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposia/Conferences have provided an unparalleled opportunity for practitioners and scholars dedicated to supporting and developing the endangered indigenous languages of the world, particularly those of North America, to meet and share knowledge and experiences gained from research and community based practice. Established through leadership at Northern Arizona University and carried on through the voluntary efforts of academics and universities which have hosted the meetings since 1994, this symposium regularly consists of plenary addresses by leading Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars, academic papers on field based experience, and papers and workshops by Aboriginal academics and practitioners on initiatives in their communities to save and advance their languages. The meetings have been held in Flagstaff Arizona, Anchorage Alaska, Louisville Kentucky, and Tucson Arizona. The proceedings in this volume are papers from the seventh conference, held in Toronto in May of 2000. Proceedings were published in one volume for the first two symposia, then one each for the Fourth and Fifth.

One essential feature of these conferences is that they have created a forum in which Aboriginal people involved with work on their own languages feel comfortable about coming together with academics from this field to discuss issues common to them both. In the past, well more than half of the attendees of this symposium have been Aboriginal people, mostly from the United States and Canada, but also including those from New Zealand, Australia, the South Pacific, Mexico, and Europe. At the Toronto conference, there were participants as well from Zimbabwe, North Atlantic countries, Russia, and Brazil. Thus, the meetings are not only a unique opportunity for sharing of information and ideas among practitioners and scholars, but also the only national or international formal and on-going sessions in which those who work on the practice and implementation of stabilizing Aboriginal languages are the focus. Neither Canada nor the United States has regular national conferences specifically on their respective indigenous languages except for highly academic linguistic meetings. Therefore, these conferences are virtually the only chance for academic and professional contact about indigenous language development on the continent, much less in a world context. As an opportunity for breaking the isolation of people working on specific languages and in specific communities, this meeting has no equal. As a result, the proceedings of the previous symposia have been eagerly received as one of the few sources of collected information on theoretical and applied work on this world-wide concern. Several hundred languages are involved in North America alone.

Key Issues for Discussion

The majority of the conference participants are usually involved with the use of Aboriginal languages in education at some level. Thus, issues such as models of curriculum and programming (bilingual education, immersion, adult

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education, literacy, and so on) and teacher training have always figured strongly among the topics of conference presentations. In addition, language development matters, such as orthography development, language resource documents (dictionaries and grammars), the role and creation of literature, the use of media, and so on, have been brought forward. Community language development and preservation are also considered, as in the public use of the languages, newspapers and broadcasting, the role of religion and culture, language policy, and so on. Language planning and advocacy strategies are compared across jurisdictions.

In the introductions to the volumes of proceedings for earlier conferences, the importance of a supportive community context for language renewal and maintenance has been emphasized. For example, Cantoni (1996, p. viii) states:

Languages are more likely to disappear as a result of the destruction of the language habitat of their speakers than because of direct attack upon their use (as, for example, when they are forbidden by political powers, especially in schools and public offices).

Similarly, Reyhner (1999, p. xviii) points out:

All five of the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages symposiums have highlighted the need for community support of school-based efforts at indigenous language revitalization and the fact that it is critically important for parents to speak their indigenous language in the presence of their young children.

In recognition of the importance of the holistic context of language use and development, the theme “Language Across the Community” was chosen for the Toronto conference.

Toronto Conference Highlights

The conference in Toronto attracted more than 600 participants from the countries mentioned above. As expected, there was a greater representation from Canada than previously. The program began on the evening of May 11, 2000, with a reception and singing and dancing by the *Wahahi:o* Iroquois Drummers. On May 12th and 13th and on the morning of the 14th, there were opening and closing blessings by Elders and high school students, plenary sessions, and 75 breakout presentations in all. On one evening, there was an open house with films by Drew Hayden Taylor and Sandy Greer and music provided by participants. At the same time, a special session was held for more than 40 people of Inuit/Yupik origins. On the following evening at the banquet, Elders were recognized and an Aboriginal comedy troupe, *Other People's Kids*, entertained.

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The four plenary talks were:

Chief Ron Ignace (Head of the Aboriginal Languages Committee of the Assembly of First Nations, Canada), “The AFN strategy for the preservation of endangered languages”.

Jeanie Bell (Community Linguist, Cairns, Australia), “A view of the indigenous language situation in Australia”.

Dorothy Lazore (Mohawk Language Teacher, Tyendinaga, Ontario, and Consultant on Immersion Programs), “Developing a Native language education system within Native communities”.

Verna Kirkness (Associate Professor Emerita of the University of British Columbia), “Banks, people and research: The reservation and the use of our languages”.

Organization of the Proceedings

The papers in this volume all resulted from sessions given at the conference. As in most proceedings of working conferences of this type, many sessions were more like workshops than papers and therefore are not represented here. However, we have been fortunate to get an excellent, rich representation of the issues, perspectives, and communities featured in the sessions of the conference overall. In this volume, the papers have been divided into six sections, roughly based on their focus.

Section I: Broad Perspectives and Policy. The five papers in this section were grouped together because of their appeal to all indigenous groups in their struggle with issues respecting their ancestral languages. Te Tuhi Robust, Executive Assistant to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Māori) in New Zealand and a former school principal, not only describes how a Māori community found its own responses to changes in government policy on education, especially with the help of information technology, but also gives a vivid account of unique challenges confronting indigenous researchers working in their own communities. Verna Kirkness, a long-time leader in public and university education for aboriginal peoples, distilled principles that must be addressed in indigenous language work at all levels. The problem faced by most indigenous languages of being viewed as a museum piece by the general public and even some indigenous peoples themselves is considered by Timoti Karetu, Chair of the Te Kohanga Reo National Trust in New Zealand. Juliet Thondhlana is Head of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Zimbabwe; her paper is a plea for a significant role for children’s own indigenous languages as a part of their public education. Geneva Langworthy, a graduate student in linguistics at the University of New Mexico, demonstrates how language revival and development can be needed and be implemented even when members of one linguistic group are separated by history and national boundaries. Each of these papers uses specific references to the writer’s own context, but emphasizes the broader application of its focus to all indigenous language situations.

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Section II: Language and Whole Community Development. In this section, five papers show approaches to the use of language development as part of community healing, growth, and learning. Grafton Antone, a United Church minister and Oneida language teacher in Toronto, and Lois Provost Turchetti, a graduate student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, outline ways in which indigenous languages and visual symbols can promote and enrich spiritual understanding and healing for people struggling in the midst of modern life. Robert St. Clair and John Busch, both of the University of Louisville, are director in the International Association for Cross-Cultural Communication and founding member of the Institute for Systems Research respectively. In their paper they explore the context of technological, structural, and symbolic change as it relates to language loss and cultural change among first Nations and First Peoples. Bill Jancewicz (Summer Institute of Linguistics) and Marguerite MacKenzie (Memorial University of Newfoundland), linguists and language developers, have worked for over a decade with long-serving Naskapi language specialists such as George Guanish and Silas Nabinicaboo at the Naskapi Development Corporation in Kawawachikamach, Quebec. Their paper describes how a language development team was created over time in the community using a broad range of expertise. A student of Native American Linguistics at the State University of New York and leader in the Tuscarora Language Committee of the Tuscarora Nation, Francene Patterson emphasizes how creativity, determination, and unconventional approaches to language promotion have worked to accomplish the goals of the Committee. Heather Blair and Sally Rice (Professors at the University of Alberta), Valerie Wood (Project Co-Director on the Cold Lake First Nations, Alberta), and John Janvier (Dene Soun'line language instructor in Cold Lake) report on the Daghida Project to conduct linguistic research, identify language revitalization possibilities, and support language renewal efforts on the Cold Lake First Nations. In this section, the first two papers look more generally at principles and approaches to the role of language in the wider context of community realities while the other three give detailed examples of sustained activities in research and development to involve many people in language promotion activities.

Section III: Educational Advances. The eight papers in this section provide detailed information about specifically educational approaches to indigenous language development. A particularly valuable aspect of this collection is that the projects described span a range of learners from young children to adults and of settings from formal to informal. Maureen Olson, teacher and coordinator of the Dulce Elementary School's Multicultural Bilingual Program in New Mexico, describes the successes and challenges of operating a summer immersion day camp for Apache youth, noting the importance of counselor training, community involvement and maintaining the immersion experience. A workshop on teaching aspects of Inuktitut was conducted by Janet McGrath, Director of Tamalik and Associates; her report includes the results of brainstorming with participants on effective learning programs and their environments. Adult learners of Mohawk are featured in the paper by David Kanatawakhon Maracle of the

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University of Western Ontario and Brock University and Merle Richards of Brock University; the authors reflect on the first year of a Mohawk immersion program and, with the help of perceptions of the learners, suggest how the second year might be structured. Mary Linn, Tessie Naranjo, Sheilah Nicholas, Inée Slaughter, Akira Yamamoto, and Ofelia Zapeda are all researchers associated with the Indigenous Language Institute (ILI) in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In a rare overview of 15 indigenous language development programs on a variety of languages in Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma, the authors describe and compare challenges and innovative strategies used in these situations. Jule Gomez de Garcia, Director of the Center for the Study of Indigenous Languages at the University of Colorado, Melissa Axelrod, Assistant Professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of New Mexico, and Maureen Olson, mentioned above in this section, draw specific attention to the role of women in literacy in indigenous languages through compelling anecdotes and examples of educational approaches that suit particular situations. A more extended example of an approach to indigenous language learning and literacy, this time through an example with high school students provides a step by step demonstration of a lesson using puppets to show how reading theory can be applied with the use of a traditional story; the author is Ruth Bennett, Ethnographic Researcher at the Center for Indian Community Development at Humboldt State University in California. Marion BlueArm, an educator with the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, writes of an extensive survey conducted in the community on ideas, feelings, and attitudes towards the Lakota language; findings include support, especially among parent-aged people, for Lakota language programs in school, with somewhat more in favour of bilingual programs than immersion. Myron Paskemin, Cree Elder in Residence at the University of Alberta, and his daughter, Donna Paskemin, Assistant Professor in the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta, give a Cree story that was used in a university course. Among these papers, then, we see innovations in types of programs aimed at reaching student populations of all ages as well as classroom approaches and less formal strategies for the actual teaching.

Section IV: Languages and Literacy Development. In this section there are four papers that focus on how linguistic work in indigenous communities has contributed to the production of materials, writing systems, and community approaches to language maintenance. Sueli Maria de Souza, a Professor at the School of Laws and Media of the University of Tocantins and the Universidade Luterana do Brasil, gives examples of texts collected in the Craô language which are relevant to children's interests and everyday lives and thus attractive for use in language lessons. With respect to the use of early documents providing Iroquoian words, Blair Rudes, Assistant Professor in the English Department of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, suggests that there are dangers in using such information in conclusions about the modern Iroquoian languages. He lists strategies to avoid drawing incorrect conclusions. Anne-Marie Baraby, a long-time linguistic consultant to Algonquian groups in Quebec and Instructor

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in French grammar at the Université de Québec à Montréal, outlines the long history and process of writing system development and standardization in Innu-aimun (Montagnais) communities in Quebec and Labrador. Anne Goodfellow of the University of British Columbia and Pauline Alfred, who teaches Kwak'wala in Alert Bay, British Columbia, have written about the relevance of linguistic studies on pidgin and creole languages as a clue to understanding variations in indigenous languages as created by young generations of speakers in North America. These four papers suggest that there is a wide variety of ways in which linguistic study can be used in the service of indigenous language development.

Section V: The Media. At all the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conferences there have been presentations on ways in which people have employed various media to promote and enhance their indigenous languages. In this section, conference participants describe their projects using various media forms. Shirley Williams, a Professor in the Department of Native Studies at Trent University in Ontario, indicates how, like Sueli Maria de Souza, she chose a topic close to the hearts of indigenous children, in her case hockey, as a basis for Ojibwe language learning lessons and how she used the technology of CD-ROMs to make dynamic activities on the topic. In keeping with his long-held interest in multimedia, José Antonio Flores Farfán of the Department of Language, Reading and Culture at the University of Arizona demonstrates the effective use of different techniques to reinforce language and cultural awareness and development with examples from his series of materials created with the Nahuas of Central Guerrero, Mexico. A special guest of the conference, Galina Diatchkova of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, describes the history of newspapers in Chukotka which reflected to varying degrees the social, economic, and political changes in indigenous society and languages in the region. Peter Brand, John Elliott, and Ken Foster, all educators with the Saanich School District in British Columbia, discuss their project to use interactive multimedia to breathe new life into a language, Sencoten, with just 15 surviving fluent speakers. The topic of the use of media, from basic print literacy to the latest in information technology, was a lively one among the participants, and it forms a central theme not only among these four papers but also in those by Te Tuhi Robust, Anne-Marie Baraby, Bill Janciewicz et al., and Jule Gomez de Garcia et al., among others.

Section VI: Meeting of Inuit and Yupik Participants. In advance of the conference, several interested people realized that the conference would attract a considerable number of Inuit and Yupik people from a broad geographic range stretching from Siberia to the North Atlantic island countries. To take advantage of this opportunity for these people to get acquainted with each other, share common interests, and establish networks, a meeting was arranged for one evening of the conference. Guy Delorme of the Katavik School Board of northern Quebec facilitated the meeting of over 40 participants and his colleague, Jacques Raymond, took notes. Each person in the room had the opportunity to speak and raise issues of relevance to the whole group.

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We greatly look forward to the long continuance of these conferences and the fellowship, learning and sharing they promote. For current information of the conferences and for on-line access to the proceedings, please visit the website at <<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL.html>>.

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