



“It’s so alive right now”
**Community-university collaboration for Lenape
language education in Pennsylvania**

Miranda J. Weinberg & Haley J. De Korne

University of Pennsylvania

Shelley DePaul

Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania

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Overview

- ▶ Lenape language education in Pennsylvania
- ▶ University program & challenges
- ▶ Community benefits
- ▶ University benefits
- ▶ Discussion: Making ideological & implementational spaces for Indigenous languages (Hornberger 2005) at universities





History of Lenape in Pennsylvania

- ▶ Walking Treaty 1737, Indian Removal Act 1830
- ▶ No federally recognized tribes in PA
- ▶ Lenape diaspora in Oklahoma, Ontario & elsewhere
 - ▶ *"There's a myth that there was no one left back east"*
Ann Dapice, PhD Lenape/ Cherokee

Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Carlisle PA

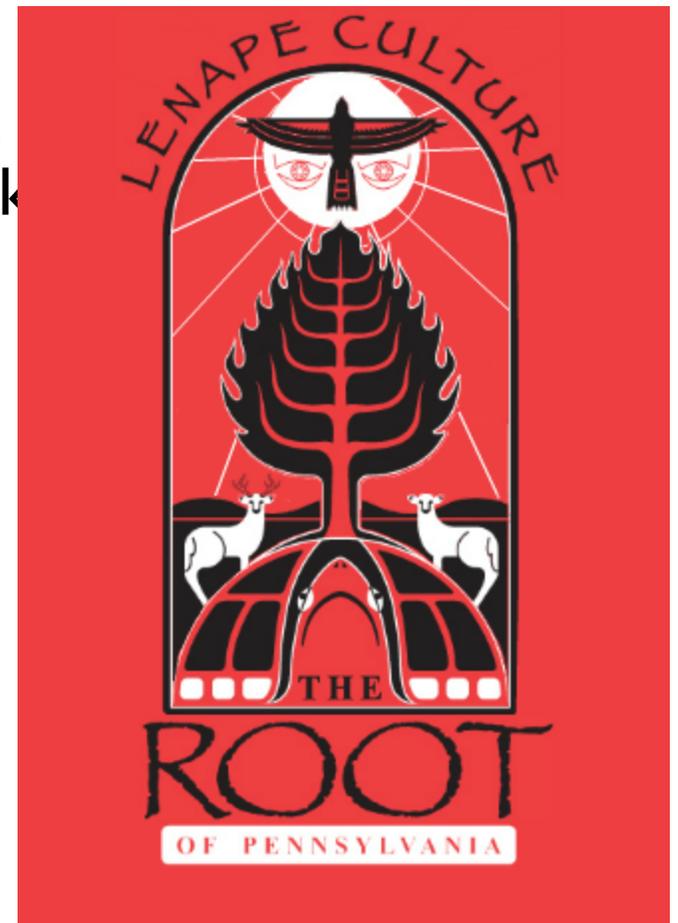


Lenape Language in Pennsylvania today

The first and foremost goal in teaching the Lenape Language is to give it back to the Lenape people....

To offer it in a way in which they can receive it with success...

[\(\(Video-Shelley\)\)](#)



Lenape education initiatives

- ▶ Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania
 - ▶ Homeschool curriculum
 - ▶ Conversational approach; Language circles
- ▶ 2008 Penn Museum Exhibit: *Fulfilling a Prophecy: The Past and Present of the Lenape of Pennsylvania*
- ▶ 2008 conference: *Native American Languages in Crisis: Exploring the Interface between Academia, Technology and Smaller Native Language Communities*
- ▶ 2009-present Lenape class at Swarthmore
- ▶ 2010 conference at Swarthmore



Research overview

- ▶ Ethnographic study of Lenape language class, Swarthmore College linguistics department
- ▶ Goals: Describe, advocate, analyze emerging themes
- ▶ Methods:
 - ▶ Participant observation in class & community event Spring 2012
 - ▶ 12 student interviews, 4 facilitator interviews
 - ▶ Document collection



How the class works

- ▶ Students learn to speak, following textbook
- ▶ Structure & grammar, as needed for conversation
- ▶ Culture & history integrated
- ▶ Assignments:
 - ▶ Quizzes
 - ▶ Story writing
 - ▶ Translation
 - ▶ Final project
 - ▶ Linguistic or
 - ▶ Pedagogical





③ ÒKHATIMÈNSHI

Kempakw

òkhatim
seke shitta
marke

Mehemichink - fruit are called òkhatim
- eat when ripe (black-seke)
- leaves, bark, and unripe fruit are poisonous (hallucinogenic)
- fruit is good raw, or in pies and jellies

④ EKOKLESÁKW ÒK HMUWINKWES

maraku
misaasu
seksu
HMUWINKWES
EKOKLESÁKW

MEHEMICHINK - fruit is excellent source of vitamins A and C, leaf tea contains multiple vitamins and minerals

MPISUN - leaf tea is an astringent and can be used to treat diarrhea (if drunk as tea) or sore mouth or throat (if used as mouthwash or gargle). the leaf tea can also be used to wash cuts, stop bleeding, and soothe irritated skin

Challenges in the University Context

- ▶ **Constant curriculum development**
 - ▶ “I don't think of it as a class, I think of it as a project...a project that's growing, and changing all the time.” Shelley
- ▶ **Standardizing, while respecting community dialect variation**
- ▶ **Funding, structural support & requirements**
- ▶ **Continuity**
- ▶ **Drawing attention away from community?**



Community benefits: Resources, status, solidarity

- ▶ **Creation of materials**
 - ▶ You-Tube videos
 - ▶ Story corpus
 - ▶ Games & activities
- ▶ **Status & awareness raising**
- ▶ **Research & linguistic analysis**
 - ▶ Verb dictionary
- ▶ **Increasing number of speakers in the state**



University benefits: More than just data!

- ▶ Gaining linguistic & local historical knowledge
- ▶ Gaining research experience
- ▶ Gaining new insight and sensitivity into endangered language issues
- ▶ Enjoying participation in applied linguistic work & creation of community-focused materials
- ▶ Respectful engagement with local Indigenous community



Student experience: Different kinds of participation

“Shelley has always been like, **we're on this journey together attitude**, and that I also really like...If we had an opinion on how something would be done, we'd be heard out. So, it's kind of funny, in a way **it's so alive right now, the experience of learning it is a very interactive one**, and that you don't get with a more common language, because your professor's not going to change the French textbook if you don't like how it's written. I found that very interesting.” S-I



Student experience: Research

- " it was real. Like, I was actually kind of doing my own research in a way. And I found that really interesting. Just, kind of **being on the front lines a little bit**. Which is something I feel like you don't get to experience in a lot of classes in other areas..." S-1
- " ...I did a bunch of work on my own doing translations and looking at certain verb structures, and that was really cool because I got to **think about how you go about doing research on a language that there's really not that much literature about**.... that was a really cool experience." S-5
-



Student experience: Making Lenape Visible

“To put it bluntly, **I had never met an Indian before**”

S-9

“Most universities, especially out west, take responsibility for their own histories, and the fact that they're on Indian land... But not so much here at Penn. **The whole idea here is that Indians are gone**, nobody's left, that kind of thing, which is incorrect. So I think that's got to be the major thing that Penn should address.”

Bob Preucel, Prof. Anthropology, UPenn



Student experience: Insights into language endangerment

" [I had] this **foreign concept of languages dying in like Papua New Guinea**. Kind of this very foreign context ..." S-9

"...the little that I knew about endangered languages, was more about **how so many are going extinct, but not necessarily how the ones that have been revitalized or are in the process of being revitalized, how that actually goes about.**" S-10

"I can't imagine anyone trying to do a language class of an endangered language without getting into **the culture side and the issues involved** with the fact that this is an endangered language....And I think it's very valuable, **so few people think about those issues.**" S-11



Student experience: Relationships & reciprocity

“It also felt really valuable, more so than sort of writing a paper or something. **It felt like accomplishing something.** And those stories actually made it into the textbook...” S-9

“ ...Maybe we can understand some of what linguists before us have written that the Lenape population may not be able to decipher. And **to keep that knowledge to ourselves would be really irresponsible, when they have helped us with our education by sharing their language.**” S-1

Negotiating knowledge

“I like to see it a certain way, and [Shelley] likes to see it a certain way, and that's OK. I mean, I think that's important, and **it's important that the work the linguists do gets translated into an understandable way.** Otherwise it's not useful and it's just frustrating. **It's been interesting learning to express my thoughts and ideas** in a way that is not frustrating to someone who doesn't know what I'm talking about, and the importance of that” S-I

“I listen. I take advice from the linguistics students, **I like to hear their perspectives because they see it from a whole different way.**...we got in arguments all the time, you know, cultural versus linguistic view. But, no, they have been able to look at the language and say...something that I would never have noticed, not being a linguist. **So I've learned a lot about why that could be helpful.**” Shelley

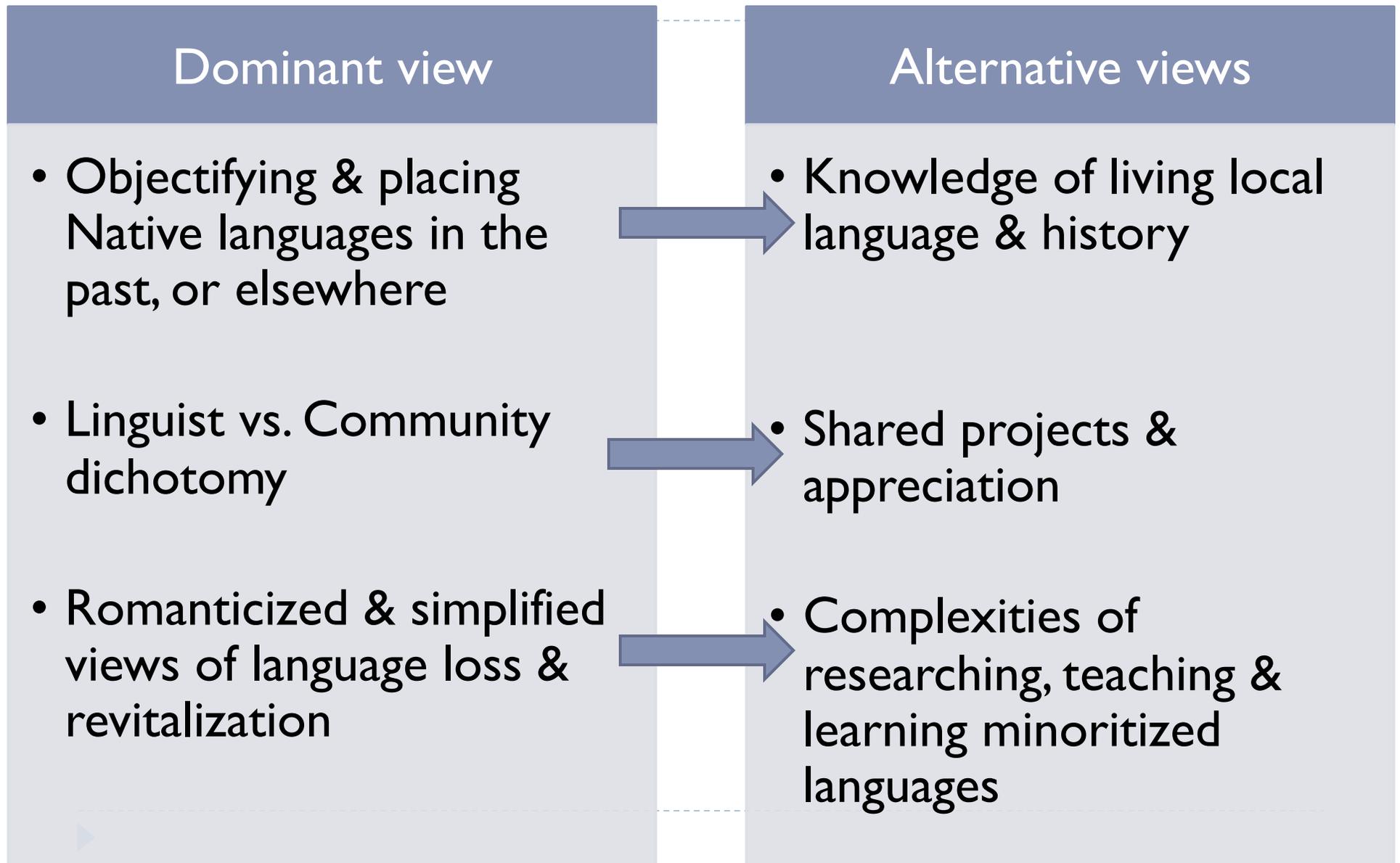


Discussion: Making spaces for indigenous languages in the university

- ▶ **Static & objectified perceptions of language & culture are common, but inaccurate** (e.g. Blommaert 2010, Moore et al 2010)
 - ▶ Languages & cultures vary across time, space, and populations
- ▶ **The way that educational institutions portray language and culture may have a significant impact on how people understand them** (e.g. Bourdieu 1970)
 - ▶ ILs = past, far away, static, separate from scholars
- ▶ **Indigenous languages often taught as objects, not as subjects**
 - ▶ Structure of Xish vs. Xish conversation



Towards a local language pedagogy...



Why share worlds of knowledge?

“The rest of the world really needs [universities] to have a strong program in the languages of that region, because other schools are very unlikely to do such things”

Ted Fernald, Prof. Linguistics, Swarthmore College

“In American history they always teach you about - or, back in the day they didn't, but nowadays, they teach you all the problems with like moving the Native Americans out west... Whenever that was taught, I would think, well, what can we do nowadays? **This just seems like a great solution, to teach the language and culture in the area where that tribe is native....** There were some dramatic changes, you can expose it to people. I feel like that would get them much more recognition. This seems

▶ like a great thing.” S-2

Why share worlds of knowledge?

“Can universities really be of help in the revitalization effort?”

Many of the Natives were extremely doubtful about this.

Much of that was due to the fact that persons dealing with indigenous languages in universities were more concerned about publishing dissertations and selling books, or at least making a name for themselves in the academic world, rather than sincerely making an effort to bring the language back to the people. **They treat it as an object to be pinned to a bulletin board and dissected rather than as a sacred and living part of the people.** This is what Indians resent. I

think that the project at Swarthmore is unique in that it has shown that **academics and community can come together in a mutual love for the language** with no personal goals or intentions other than to resurrect the

▶ language and to return it to its people.”

Why share worlds of knowledge?

“... The students in this class did a lot of hard work, and they contributed all of it to the project pro bono with that intent in mind. We found that linguists do, indeed, have much to offer the revitalization effort, since many of the manuscripts have been collected by linguists in their own particular language (phonetics) which we cannot decipher even though we would love to know what elements of culture and language these manuscripts contain. There IS revitalization work that **ONLY** linguists can achieve for us, and **the linguistic students in my class have now begun to undertake that work with the right spirit.** This is a huge accomplishment.”

Shelley DePaul (2.16.13)





Wanishi

▶ **Comments & questions?**

Miranda

mirandaw@gse.upenn.edu

Haley

hde@gse.upenn.edu

Shelley

depaul@ptd.net