

Linguistic Vitality in Manitoba

A survey of language, health, and wellbeing in a northern Ojibwa community



Poplar River First Nation

Azaadiwi-ziibi Nitam-Anishinaabe

○ The People and Language

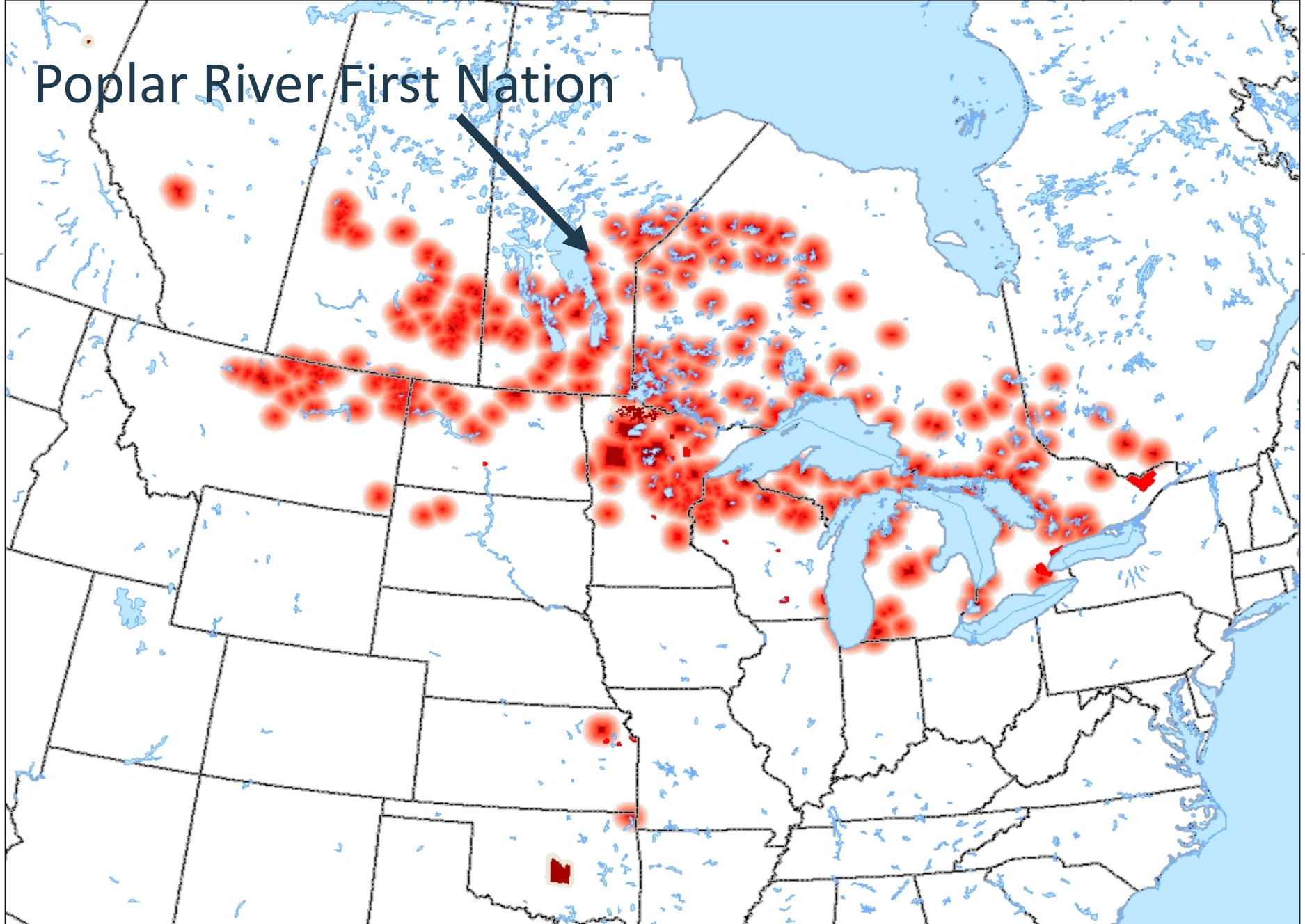
- ~ 1200 residents
- Majority Ojibwa, some Metis Nation
- Ojibwe Continuum
- Northwestern, *Anishinaabemowin*
– EGIDS 7 ‘shifting’

○ The Land and Community

- Sophia Rabliauaskas
- Pimachiowin Aki -*The Land that gives Life*
world heritage project



Poplar River First Nation



(<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c1/Anishinaabewaki.jpg>)

Poplar River language survey project

Motivating questions: *What?*, *How?*, and *Why?* of describing linguistic health

- ***What*** is guiding this description?
 - Limits of LVE and EGIDS
 - modified framework adapted from LVE
- ***How*** is it being done?
 - Survey method, 'bottom-up' approach
- ***Why*** are we doing it?
 1. Describe the vitality of Ojibwe in PRFN from the eyes of those who live there.
 2. Consider linguistic vitality in terms of determinants of health

Our Framework

A re-envisioning of LVE

Factors of Vitality

- 1 Intergenerationality
- 2 Number of Speakers
- 3 Domains and Functions
- 4 Attitudes and Beliefs
- 5 Access to Educational Materials
- 6 Programs
- 7 Language Knowledge

Removes:

- **Documentation**

Consolidates:

- **Numbers** – total and proportional
- **Attitudes** – community and official
- **Domains** – all domains

Redefines:

- **Materials**

Adds:

- **Programs** – Ongoing and planned
- **Knowledge** – compared to self-reports and relative to age-groups and total numbers

The Survey

Questionnaire design and target factors

- 4 Sections

1. Background
2. Attitudes and Beliefs
3. Ojibway in the Community
4. Language Knowledge

- Questions specific to target factors

- Factors represented proportionately to their relevance, for our purposes

	 Vitality Factor 	 # of relevant questions
1	Attitudes and Beliefs	14
2	Domains and Functions	9
3	Knowledge	9
4	Intergenerationality	8
5	Number of Speakers	5
6	Programs	4
7	Access to Materials	2

The Survey

Questions – targeting factors

e.g. Section 2 - Attitudes and Beliefs

- 2.5 ‘It is more important to speak English today than traditional languages.’ [agree / disagree]
- 2.9 ‘It is ok for people who are not Ojibway to learn Ojibway.’ [agree / disagree]
- 2.12 ‘What do you think are obstacles to you or other people speaking or learning Ojibway?’
 - Respectively address:
 - Relative prestige or practicality
 - Linguistic purity, ownership, exclusivity
 - Perceptions regarding reasons for endangerment

The Survey

Questions – varied styles

3.4 'Do you already have or want to have any of the following services provided in Ojibway?'

Service	Have	Want	Unsure
Medical care		✓	
School Classes	✓		
Daycare			
Recreational activities (sports teams, youth centre, etc.)		✓	
Newspapers	✓		
Television shows			✓
Radio			✓
Restaurants	✓		
Law enforcement		✓	
Interpreting / Translation		✓	
Band Office / government services	✓		
Other _____			

○ Questions vary in style

- Table style
- Multiple choice + other
- Yes/no
- Short answer

○ Can target multiple factors

- e.g. domains + materials + attitudes

The Survey

Language knowledge section

○ Challenges

- Issues of dialect
- Literate bias
- Potential for negative impact on participants

○ Benefits

- Avoids dichotomized speaker base description
- Informs self-reported abilities
- Nuanced description of variation across community

○ 4 styles of questions – varied content, style, difficulty

1. Written translation
2. Audio translation
3. Comprehension

The Survey

Language knowledge – written, translation and comprehension

4.1a

Noongom gaa-giizhigag adaawewigamigong ni-gii-izhaa.
Gaawiin wiin eta go bezhig. Gabe-ishkwaa-naawakwe
n-gii-babaamadaawe. Ngoji go gii-niizho-
diba'iganeyaag.

- I cannot translate this
- Would you have said this differently in Poplar River?

- What happened at 2 o'clock?
- Where did you go this afternoon?
- How many stores did you go to?

Today, in the afternoon, I went to the store. Not just one. I went shopping all afternoon. That was at about two o'clock.

(Talking Gookom's Language, Patricia M. Ningewance)

The Survey

Language knowledge – audio, translation and comprehension



Waaboozens nindaaw. Nindizhinikaaz Nicholas. Nindaa wiimbinakizing.
Ziigwang niminwendaan ji-bakwajibidooyaan waabigwaniin.
Nibabaaminizhikawaag memengwaag. Mememgwaag nibabaaminizhikaagoog.
Niibing niminwendaan ji-anwebiyaam giizhigaateng miinwaa waabamagwaa bineshiiyag.

*I am a bunny. My name is Nicholas. I live in a hollow tree.
In the spring, I like to pick flowers.
I chase the butterflies, and the butterflies chase me.
In the summer, I like to lie in the sun and watch the birds*

(I am a Bunny, Ole Risom)

<http://ojibwe.net/stories/childrens/i-am-a-bunny/>



Chigaaming shkitoyaanh bagosendamyaaanh,
jibaaygamigong anamiyaanh chikeyaanh.
Wenesh waa ezhiwebag pii baasadengak kaanan?
Pii niibishensan mitigens bid?
Pii gokoshag taawagag ziitaaganing?
Maamwimaajaan ina Anishinaabemoyaanh miinwaa neseyaanh?

*In the sea I can hope
in the grave I pray alone.
What happens when the bones are dried?
When the little leaves have become sticks?
When the sow's ears are in salt?
Do they leave together, the language and the last
breath?*

(A Poem for the Children of the Great Lakes – Margarent Noori)

<http://ojibwe.net/stories/fall/children-of-the-great-lakes/>

Language and Wellbeing

Disparities in health and their social determinants

Health Disparities in Canada largely attributable to:

- Indigenous Status
- Socio-Economic Status
- Location

(Frohlich et al 2006)

Significant determinants unique to Indigenous populations

- **Cultural Continuity**
- Phys./Soc. Environment
- Self-Determination
- Connectivity to Land, Reconciliation
- History of Health
- Racism, Marginalization

(Postl et al 2010)

Language and Wellbeing

Where does this project fit?

- Determinants of linguistic health mirror or are analogous to determinants of cultural continuity

Cultural continuity factors

- Self determination
- Land claims
- Education
- Cultural facilities
- Health services
- Police and fire
- *Language*

Major linguistic health factors

- Attitudes and Beliefs
- Programs, Materials, Knowledge
- Domains and Functions

(Chandler and Lalonde 1998)

Next Steps

- Extend this community-level methods of assessing language vitality to other communities of Manitoba
 - Explore underlying character of linguistically similar communities
 - How do underlying factors of linguistic health differ among superficially like linguistic communities?
- Use community-specific descriptions of linguistic health in to explore relation between language and health outcomes in communities.

Gratitude and Acknowledgement

- Poplar River First Nation Community
- Sophia Rabliauaskas
- Margaret Bittern
- Dr. Margaret Noodin
- SSHRC-CRSH
- Dr. Nicole Rosen and U of M
- ICLDC and UH Manoa
- Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project www.pimachiowinaki.org



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