

## **Introduction: Collaborative approaches to the challenges of language documentation and conservation**

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The papers in this special issue are the result of case studies on methods in language documentation, language conservation, and language reclamation in the Americas. These papers were first presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Symposium for American Indian Languages, held at the University of Ottawa, on April 13-14, 2018, jointly with the Workshop on the Structure and Constituency in the Languages of the Americas (WSCLA). SAIL and WSCLA were funded by a Connection Grants (#611-2017-0613) from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).<sup>1</sup>

The papers bring together unique, informed and relevant insights at the interface of several domains (language documentation, language conservation, and language reclamation, language assessment surveys), in which the focus is on Indigenous communities and their efforts to preserve and/or reclaim their language for the future generation of speakers. This is the first time papers presented at SAIL have been published together in one special volume. They build on the increasing efforts towards community-based language research around the globe (see for example Bischoff & Jany 2018; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009; Hinton & Hale 2013 [2001]; Penfield et al. 2008). There is a great deal of published material that resulted from community-based language revitalization work on the Indigenous languages of Canada and the United States (Burnany & Reyhner 2002; Cantoni 1996; Reyhner 1990, 1997; Reyhner et al. 1999, Reyhner & Lockard 2009).<sup>2</sup> Some recent volumes with case studies include Coronel-Molina & McCarty (2016) and Pérez Báez et al. (2016). This is not to say that community-based research is not being undertaken in these regions (see Fitzgerald, to appear, for an overview of the community-based research taking place in the Amazon region) and reports on some of the current community-based research in these regions have been published in open source journals such as *Language Documentation & Conservation* (e.g., Caballero 2017, Cruz & Woodbury 2014, Silva 2016, Stenzel 2014; Yamada 2007) and *Language Documentation and Description* (e.g. Hornberger 2017, Olko 2018). The

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<sup>2</sup> Most of these resulted from papers presented at the Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium, and are available online at <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/books.html> (visited August 20, 2019).

present issue builds on the trend of reporting case studies of community-based Indigenous language research so that we may better understand the challenges and successes of engaging in this work in diverse contexts.

This issue includes seven contributions that grew out of SAIL and the conversations and interactions that followed between the contributors and us, the editors. All the contributions were blind-reviewed by colleagues who are Indigenous linguists and/or are engaged in community-based research or “collaborative consultation” (Leonard & Haynes 2010) with Indigenous languages of the Americas. All three subcontinents of the Americas are represented in the papers in this volume. The first contribution of this volume, by Carreau, Dane, Klassen, Mitchell, & Cox provides an account of a partnership between a university and community-based organizations with the goal of implementing Community Service Learning (CSL) around language documentation training (e.g. linguistic annotation and the use of software tools to create searchable text). As a case study, they show how the collaboration between the Yukon Native Language Centre and graduate students from Carleton University contributes to community priorities for local language programs, resources, and training of both community members and graduate students. Furthermore, they show how this collaboration can foster mutually supportive relationships between a community-based organization and an academic institution, thus emphasizing the role of collaboration as a core component in language documentation and revitalization projects.

Josh Holden examines the role of land-based education and ceremony in the curriculum at Blue Quills University, and the contribution to language reclamation work. He also describes some of the approaches to teaching linguistics as well as Cree and Dene languages as second languages. Holden zeroes in on the creation of linguistic vocabulary for talking about the sounds and grammatical aspects of the language as a way to facilitate the teaching of linguistics in the Dene language. This activity not only broadens the domain in which Dene language can be used, but also provides a sense of ownership among the students who are part of the process of creating new lexicon in the language.

Benjamin Frey provides an assessment of the usefulness of corpora creation in Cherokee (Iroquoian, ISO 639-3 *chr*) for second language learning and language revitalization efforts. He discusses the challenges and pitfalls of corpora creation in Cherokee, noting for example how some concepts like words versus phrases can be problematic for automatic translation due to the language’s complex morphology. Notwithstanding, Frey presents some insights on how the corpora can be used for teaching and learning the language.

Suzi Lima describes the process of creating a monolingual pedagogical grammar of Kawaiwete (Tupian) as an outcome of a community-based language documentation project. Lima lays out the model she used to engage community members in language research through a series of linguistic workshops in the Kawaiwete communities. She demonstrates that in the process of creating material for language maintenance efforts, scholars can also contribute with capacity-building by training community members who are interested in these activities to become researchers of their own languages.

Katherine J. Riestenberg reports on teaching practices at a small Sierra Juárez-Zapotec (Otomanguan, ISO 639-3 *zaa*) language revitalization program in San Pablo Macuilianguis, Oaxaca, Mexico. Teachers at the program have sought strategies to support their student’s speaking abilities in the language. Riestenberg describes her work with the program which was aimed at adapting communicative language teaching

strategies to be more useful and appropriate for this particular context, noting that existing research on communicative language teaching has largely ignored the challenges of language revitalization. She explains how teachers adapted and applied two particular strategies: providing rich input and supporting meaningful social interaction. The examples show how teachers can support students' learning even when few pedagogical resources are available.

Laurel Anne Hasler, Marie Odile Junker, Marguerite MacKenzie, Mimie Neacappo, & Delasie Torkornoo describe their work developing new terminology and creating digital tools to support the East Cree (ISO 639-3 *mbc*) and Innu (ISO 639-3 *moe*) languages (Algonquian). Drawing on two cases, Innu terminology development in the legal context and East Cree terminology development in the medical context, the authors explain how workshops and digital technology supported the creation of new words as well as teaching resources such as interactive images, booklets, and multimedia apps. Several challenges of this type of work are discussed, including dialectal variation, social context, and linguistic considerations. The paper demonstrates the advantages of multi-community efforts in addressing these challenges.

Frederick White explores the role of film and drama in Haida (ISO 639-3 *hai*) language revitalization. The paper focuses on a theatrical production, *Sinxii'gangu*, and a film, *Edge of the Knife*, both of which are entirely in Haida. White reflects on how these efforts have generated excitement about the seeing and hearing the language beyond the typical settings (official community meetings, school), and he describes how they have offered opportunities to practice the language, especially everyday conversation as opposed to narratives, which are more commonly documented. He notes that much of the language and cultural material was new to the writers, actors, and producers, whose learning was guided by fluent elders. While he also points out some challenges, he concludes with a list of ways these efforts have positively impacted Haida revitalization efforts.

Vidhya Elango, Isabella Coutinho, & Suzi Lima examine the vitality of the Cariban language Macuxi (ISO 639-3 *mbc*) and the Arawakan language, Wapixana (ISO 639-3 *wap*) in the multilingual community of Serra da Lua, Roraima, located in Brazil. Due to the proximity with the Guyana border, some people in the community also speak English. Although the primary goal of the survey was to provide a diagnostic of the vitality of the two Indigenous languages spoken in the community, the authors also provide a discussion of the use of English in this community. Even though community members have positive attitudes towards the Indigenous languages of the community, the survey shows that there is little intergenerational transmission of the languages resulting in speakers shifting to Portuguese (the dominant language of Brazil). English seems to have little influence in language shift; however, Indigenous teachers note the importance of having pedagogical materials in English that can assist the Indigenous immigrants from Guyana who can only speak English.

Together, the papers in this special publication showcase the diverse ways communities are taking on the challenge of language revitalization. It is our hope that they can inspire further development of theoretical connections in which Indigenous ways of thinking and doing are brought into the discipline of linguistics through projects driven by Indigenous community members (cf. Leonard 2012, 2018). We are thankful to the contributors of this volume as well as all of the presenters and attendees at SAIL and WSCLA in Ottawa. We also want to express our gratitude to colleagues who provided anonymous peer reviews of the papers presented here.

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