

Collective effort on Language Reclamation movement from personal lives

Presenters:

Judy Doolittle

Affirmations for Language Revitalization

Sandy Bay Council of Elders

Interviewees:

Chun Ong – Second Language speaker

Michael Li – Second Language speaker

Charlie Smith – Second Language speaker

Technician:

Michael Li

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION – being able to learn the language to communicate

- 1) Learning sounds – learn to recognize and say these sounds

Ojibwe sound chart – double vowel sound chart

<https://youtu.be/t0V1SPM0ySY>

Children mimic sounds and even mouth movements. Children pick up sounds, words, and sentences from those around them thus acquiring language through interaction with other children and adults. It is the same when an adult learns a language – it is through interaction.

- 1) Learning words – the sounds put together form meanings.

Example: miigwech You say **miigwech** when you are thanking someone or when you want to say “You are welcome”

- 1) Learning sentences – the sounds are put together to form complex meanings. They form a complete thought.

Basic sentences, key verbs, frequently used words

Children’s brains have a higher plasticity – the ability to create new neurons and synapses, thus have better connections between information. As a result, children absorb the new information readily. Adults on the other hand use problem solving and study skills to learn the new language. Children and adults both have an equal footing with the different capabilities they possess.

Language Development covers: listening, speaking, reading, & writing

- 1) Silent period – when the student is taking in the language but not speaking it.
- 2) The student starts using short phrases but is still more intent on listening to the language. Lots of mistakes are made here.
- 3) The students can say longer sentences. Students relies on familiar topics. Vocabulary increases with less mistakes.
- 4) Speech is fairly fluent with less errors. New contexts are challenging with lack of vocabulary knowledge.
- 5) Speech is getting fluent but gaps in vocabulary still there.
- 6) The student may have an accent but is fluent and comfortable in the second language. The student may continue learning the new language in depth.

What are good practices for a language instructor:

- 1) Explain about the humor in the Ojibwe language that words sound similar sometimes and if a speaker enunciates a bit off it can be funny. Blame it on the trickster – Nanabush why it is so. As a learner don't take this the wrong way if someone laughs. As you become fluent and your language becomes picturesque when someone talks you will see why it can be humorous to speak the language.
- 2) Explain that some common words like “please,” “You are welcome” are not in the language. In this collective society the worldview is that it is a given that you treat everyone equally the best that you can and they do the same.
- 3) Explain that “good-bye” is not in the language. the reason being is good bye seems too permanent. In this worldview we don't die - The belief is life continues in the spirit realm where we meet again.
- 4) Explain about the worldview that it is very different – humor, value system, spirituality, and ways of being are imbedded in the language.
- 5) Balance is key in all that we do.
- 6) Nature law is how we are instructed to take care of the gifts bestowed by the Creator such as: life, all lifeforms, plants, land, water, and air.
- 7) Natural laws govern all relationships within the circle of life.
- 8) Explain that one offers tobacco as an offering in relation to being thankful about the gifts and having the use of the gifts on a regular basis.

- 1) An example of a cause and effect of a natural law is a word like “onjine” when one dishonors any of the gifts bestowed by the Creator. It means that one’s negative actions will follow them in a bad way.
- 2) Nature law says one needs to balance the elements of the heart, mind, body, and spirit.
- 3) It is a joy to be around some people who have a comical view of looking at the world. It is wonderful to escape to the worldview when the world becomes overwhelming and stressful. By the way mispronunciations happen to fluent speakers as well sometimes purposely to make someone laugh for it is a humorous language. Off course, never laugh at anyone for learning the language and making mistakes but laugh with them.
- 4) Demonstrate the learning action. Example - Total Physical Response.
- 5) Speak slowly and clearly.
- 6) Use visuals, sketches, gestures, intonation, and other nonverbal cues.
- 7) Give clear instructions.
- 8) Check for understanding.

Encourage students

Learning Ojibwe for beginners:

- 1) Buy a book.
- 2) Enroll in a class.
- 3) Download a language learning app.
- 4) Use a recorder device.
- 5) Focus on everyday phrases.
- 6) Get a notebook to make notes on vocabulary
- 7) Focus on skills of speaking and listening if you want to communicate in Ojibwe. Practice your language skills where you can.
- 8) Focus on all four cores in Ojibwe if you want to develop skills in: listening, speaking, writing, and reading the language.
- 9) Immerse yourself with people that are fluent in Ojibwe.
- 10) Join a Mentorship program.

What can we do in the community to revitalize the Ojibwe language personally? What are the language barriers, challenges, or constraints that need to be reformed and revised in the collective endeavors for language reclamation?

Speak only in Ojibwe at home to the children and adults alike.

- 1) Fluent speakers use only Ojibwe in the home.
- 2) Create activities to speak in Ojibwe in the home. Look at family photos and say, “this is your grandmother,” “this is your little sister,” “this is my friend”, etc.
- 3) Speak in Ojibwe to children in various situations. When going out say, “Get your coat”, we are going shopping”. When eating say, “pass me the potatoes”, “pass me the milk”, etc.
- 4) When cooking potatoes teach step by step verbs, “I am washing the potatoes,” “I am peeling the potatoes,” “I am slicing the potatoes,” “I am frying the potatoes.”
- 5) The weather is forever changing daily. Describe the weather conditions then ask, “What is the weather like today?”
- 6) Offer your time for Ojibwe Language Revitalization in the community. Example: language gatherings, radio station, school, etc.
- 7) Participate in the Mentorship program teaching one or two students.

CONCLUSION

Ojibwe Language & Culture is a foundation for well-being for the anishinaabe – mino-bimaadiziwin. Ultimately, a language & culture provides a sense of belonging which we all need.

Affirmations for Language Revitalization

Sandy Bay Council of Elders