

Healing Through Language: Revitalization and Renewal in the Wendat Confederacy

Honors Thesis

History Department

Spring 2020

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Professor Rosenthal's 101 course

Professor Schneider, adviser

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge that I am a guest here, as UC Berkeley is situated on Huichin, the ancestral and unceded land of the Muwekma and Chochenyo Ohlone people. As a member of the campus community, I recognize that I have and continue to benefit from the use and occupation of this land. I have a responsibility to acknowledge and make visible the university's relationship to Native people. Throughout this paper I have striven to clarify an Indigenous perspective of the relationship between academic institutions and Indigenous communities. My methodology, which was developed in response to the legacy of this relationship, is a proposed solution to healing this relationship.

Acknowledgements aren't typical in an undergraduate thesis, but in line with my Indigenizing and decolonizing methodology, not to mention my own worldview, I believe it is right to acknowledge those whose help and collaboration were essential to my being able to present this knowledge in an academic forum. As anyone who has spent two minutes in an Indigenous community knows, gratitude comes before anything else, and as such it should open my thesis paper. My community collaborators, some of whom sat down for oral history interviews, helped me form the aspects of this project which have become the eagle feather in its cap (Indigenized) or the jewel in its crown (Europeanized).

My language and cultural collaborators took time out of their schedules to talk to me: Richard Zane Smith, Catherine Tamaro, Linda Sioui, Arakwa Sioui, and Marcel Godbout. The language work they are doing and have done in their respective communities is deeply inspiring to me, and it is the fuel that keeps me going. Stéphane Picard, who is the Wendake archivist, helped me find some of my most exciting sources. In addition, I would like to thank

Jean-François Richard at the Wendake band council office for approving my research in Wendake. Community consent of a project is vital to any methodology which centers the needs of Indigenous people. I hope my project can continue to serve the communities of the Wendat Confederacy as it grows into my Master's Thesis.

There are a few people without whom I couldn't have gotten this deeply into the topic—indeed I might not have been able to access it in the first place! They are: Dr. Kathryn Magee Labelle, Dr. John L. Steckley, and Dr. Craig Kopriv. This topic was not very accessible at first, and it took months of background research before I could begin constructing the project. I found Steckley and Labelle's works at a time when I felt I had been spinning my wheels and going nowhere for a long while. Their scholarship provided a beacon of light, both in terms of information and methodology. Craig, Kathryn, and John continuously and kindly answered my questions as I went through this process. Craig was kind enough to pass along the Wa^adat keyboard that he created for both the computer and phone, which is solely responsible for the appearance of properly written Wa^adat words throughout this paper.

Our Indigenous community on campus is small but very supportive. Melissa Stoner, who is our Native Studies Librarian at UC Berkeley, has spent hours upon hours with me since the Fall 2017 semester, scouring every database imaginable to discover and verify sources. Phenocia Bauerle, who is the Director of Native American Student Development, consistently helped me stay anchored to my methodology, despite the constant pull and pressure of the Westernized academic institution. The Indigenous and Native Coalition, of which I have been a proud society leader on the council, has been my family on campus.

The most unique components of this project would not have been possible without funding. The following sources allowed me to travel to an Indigenous languages conference in Saskatchewan in 2018, and then to Wyandotte, Oklahoma, Toronto, and Wendake, Québec in 2019: the Canadian Studies Program, the Linguistics Department, the Center for Race and Gender undergraduate grant, the Native American Student Education and Enrichment grant, and the Haas Scholars Fellowship. The Haas Scholars Program has given me a year of supportive feedback and a lovely cohort of friends. I would like to give a special shout out to fellow Haas Scholar Mackhai Nguyen, who has by far edited this paper more than anyone else (excepting maybe my mentor, Professor Schneider) without ever forgetting what the purpose of my research is.

I would like to thank the following linguists and UCB language revitalizers for being such a welcoming community where it was safe for me to ask questions and share my experiences: Dr. Beth Piatote, the Language Revitalization Working Group, and the Linguistics Fieldwork Forum. I would especially like to thank Dr. Line Mikkelsen, who helped me secure my first substantial funding for this work, provided a seminar where I could acquire the tools to begin learning the languages, invited me to the Fieldwork Forum meetings, and provided essential moral support in the form of resources and reflection.

Within the History Department, I was provided with support from faculty such as Dr. Brian DeLay and Dr. Thomas Dandeleit, whose office hours meetings have been unforgettable and who have also written me vital letters of recommendation. Leah Flanagan, who is our undergraduate adviser, has helped me keep everything on track for these three madcap years. Dr.

Caitlin Rosenthal, my professor and adviser for the 101 seminar, has helped me shape and refine my writing process and guided me through this crucial final semester.

I would also like to say thank you to some of my Berkeley City College professors: Dr. Sabrina Nelson who helped my writing flourish and gave me my first opportunity to interview people I admire for a college project, and Dr. Nola Hadley Torres who demonstrated to me the kind of professor, historian, and community member I want to be. Thank you to Dr. Todd Holmes who in addition to being a history professor also works at the UC Berkeley Oral History Center and helped me craft my first set of interview questions.

My most stalwart cheerleader and anchor of calm amidst the storm has been my main mentor, Dr. Elena Schneider, whose relentless open-mindedness and solidarity with my cause have given me faith in the future of academia. She has been unwavering in her support of me in the face of a great many challenges this past year and a half. Every scholar should have at least one place they can go where they feel really seen and understood, where their project makes the most sense. For me, that is Professor Schneider's office.

It is also vital that I acknowledge publicly and up front to my readers that I am not an enrolled member of any of the nations which are part of the Wendat Confederacy. As such, I do not have formal political status, and cannot say "I am Wendat" without a lot of complex explanation about identity. Therefore, the best statement I can make is that I am a Wendat *descendant*. In saying this, I am erasing my own erasure by settler society, recognizing my connection to my own ancestors and therefore the nature of my investment in this research project. I am acknowledging my own ancestors and the proud cultural lineage that was passed on

to me; this is something that no one can take away from me. I *identify* as Indigenous for this reason and others, including how my ethnicity was treated by people outside of my family in the community I grew up in. I want to be clear on my positionality because there is a tendency for folks outside of the Indigenous community to treat each Indigenous individual as a spokesperson for either their tribe or all Native people. Indigenous society, Indian Country, is very pluralistic and is not a monolith.

I am very grateful to Jean-François Richard and the Huronne-Wendat band council office in Wendake for approving my research within the community. However, *I do not speak for the Huronne-Wendat Nation or any other nation in the Wendat Confederacy*. I am not enrolled, which means that I am not recognized by the community as a citizen. I speak for myself based on my own identity and life experience.

None of us do this alone. It takes a village, and I want to make sure mine is recognized and not forgotten.

“...nothing grounds a person or a community more powerfully in indigeneity than carrying the tribal language...No matter what your enrollment status is, if you know your language, you know who you are.”

- Anton Treuer, *The Language Warrior’s Manifesto*

“If I claim to be Wyandot, I need to at least have some understanding of the language of my ancestors...to be able to think in the ways of our ancestors. And to do so means to really understand the language, understand how it’s put together, how thoughts were put together, how things were expressed, how stories were told...”

- Richard Zane Smith, *oral history interview*

“I’ve pretty well dedicated part of my life to our history and our identity... I felt...when I was a teenager that I as a Huronne-Wendat had an identity complex in [the] face of the other Natives who came here. And they surely said, ‘Well you guys are not Native; you don’t speak your language.’”

- Linda Sioui, *oral history interview*

“Five hundred years ago, Europeans came to America and announced, ‘Those Indians ain’t gonna last.’ They’ve kept saying it every year since. And for five hundred years in a row, the Europeans have been wrong. There is nothing as powerful as a living tribal language to prove that point.”

- Anton Treuer, *The Language Warrior’s Manifesto*

Introduction

Kwe, n'dio. Fallon yiatsih, Wendat n'di. Onywawenda' yeienhwi's. *Hello. My name is Fallon, I am Wendat. I am learning our language.*¹

This study focuses on the use of original languages (prior to European contact) within the Wendat Confederacy over time, more specifically, the language revitalization movements, and how these movements intersect with and counteract historical trauma. This research project aims to tackle one data-based question and two process-based questions. Pertaining to data: What is the story and timeline of language revitalization within the Wendat Confederacy? In terms of the process for conducting this project: What is a more Indigenous-centered, community-engaged research methodology, and what new insights might it bring to our understanding of language revitalization? I seek to decolonize the historical discipline and consciously adopt a methodology more sensitive to Wendat ways of keeping and sharing knowledge.

In the summer of 2019, I travelled throughout the Wendat Confederacy to conduct my research. I visited Wyandotte, Oklahoma, where I spent a week with Richard Zane Smith, culminating in an oral history interview. We visited cultural and ceremonial sites, I visited the tribal museum and met new community members, and Richard gave me lessons in the Waⁿdat language and a forty-five minute language immersion experience entirely in the language. I went to Toronto and spent time with Wyandot of Anderdon faithkeeper, Catherine Tamaro, who gave an oral history interview. And finally, I went to Wendake, Québec, where I interviewed Linda Sioui and Marcel Godbout, and received Wendat language lessons from Arakwa Sioui. While I was there, I was granted permission by the Huronne-Wendat band council to conduct my

¹ These words are in the Wendat language.

research in Wendake. I also visited historical and cultural sites of importance and conducted archival research in the Wendake Archives. Due to time constraints, the interviews with Catherine Tammaro and Marcel Godbout will not be included in this iteration of the project, but the archival research and the interviews with Richard Zane Smith and Linda Sioui will be introduced in later chapters.

Language is at the heart of Indigenous cultural identity. The loss of language exacerbates historical trauma by reducing a people's capacity to describe their history and identity in their own terms, as well as by not allowing ancestral identity to be fully claimed. Language being a core component of identity, the loss of language often leads to an alienation from oneself, in the form of disconnection from one's ancestors and cultural history. Without understanding the languages of an Indigenous population, we can't fully comprehend that group's perspective or express their history. Understanding history through the lens of language gives us better insight into language loss, historical trauma, and their consequences.

With language loss, the preferred phrasing is to say the language "fell asleep" or was "in the process of falling asleep." This terminology is rooted in acknowledging language as another member of the community, a living member; it signifies a very personal relationship between language and people. Thus, the act of revitalizing a language results in the phrase "waking up the language." The older terminology of "dead language" is no longer applied to Indigenous languages with living descendants, as it does not accurately reflect the life original languages have always had in Indigenous communities, so I empower you to correct people you hear using that term if they are applying it to Indigenous languages.

The United Nations declared 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages. This reflected and honored an ongoing movement in Indigenous communities throughout the world. Colloquially, this movement is referred to as language revitalization, but the term is not one-size-fits-all. Broadly, a community engaged in a language revitalization movement is either working to maintain their language(s) with the challenge of fewer and fewer speakers (technically classified by linguists as language *renewal*), or they are reviving a language that has *fallen asleep*, meaning “that there was a complete break in intergenerational transmission of the language.”²

Language revitalization is necessary because, as Anton Treuer said in *The Language Warrior's Manifesto*, “when we deeply engage in our language communities, we can decolonize that process [of westernization]. We can learn how our ancestors saw the world, greeted one another, ate, and made decisions. Language lets us connect to, rather than disconnect from, our cultural patrimony and customs.”³ The language revitalization movements within the Wendat Confederacy show us how we can recover a Wendat and Indigenous perspective of history. While Indigenous language revitalization has become a hot topic in the media in recent years, individual Wendat community members have diligently carried the language throughout the twentieth century to today, with women often at the forefront as key figures.

It is often stated that the Wendat language fell asleep in the late nineteenth century, and did not begin to wake up until the cultural revival of the 1990s.⁴ However, evidence in the life's

² Megan Lukaniec, “The elaboration of verbal structure: Wendat (Huron) verb morphology,” PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 2018, p. viii.

³ Anton Treuer, *The Language Warrior's Manifesto: How to Keep Our Languages Alive No Matter the Odds*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2020), p. 15.

⁴ Megan Lukaniec, “The Form, Function and Semantics of Middle Voice in Wendat,” Master's Thesis. Université Laval Québec, 2010; John L. Steckley, *The Eighteenth-Century Wyandot: A Clan-Based Study*, (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), pp. 7-8.

work of Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina shows a continuity of work in the Wendat language, without any gap. It is said that the Waⁿdat language fell asleep in the 1960s and only began to be revitalized in the late twentieth century, but the life and efforts of Richard Zane Smith may suggest it never fully fell asleep, or that revitalization began much earlier than was previously thought. Both of these cases would mean that the languages of the Wendat Confederacy never fully fell asleep, even if the nature of language use changed and is not currently in the state the communities would like it to be in. We may want to call these languages “sleepy” rather than “sleeping” which would re-classify their language revitalization movements as movements of language *renewal*. The survival of these language movements has been due to a small group of individuals who have been able to keep hope, and language, alive across generations.

This thesis will attempt to recognize their efforts. It will describe the specific challenges Wendat peoples have faced with regard to language, such as the dispersal and language loss from first contacts to the present day. Once I have explained this crucial historical context, I will articulate the importance of language and language revitalization to the Wendat community in relationship with three key concepts: historical trauma, settler colonialism, and history keeping. The rest of this thesis will be dedicated to reconstructing a community-centered narrative of language revival that highlights the role of women and other underappreciated individuals of the Wendat Confederacy who began a process of language restoration and renewal long before the better known, state-funded movements of the 1990s and afterwards. In collecting oral histories from these individual language heroes, I am decolonizing the historical record on language in the Wendat Confederacy, creating a new archive of primary sources that are from a Wendat perspective.

Historical Context: The Wendat Confederacy

Distance, a result of dispersal and diaspora, presents challenges for language revitalization in the Wendat Confederacy. Because of their geographic placement, the four member groups of the confederacy are interfacing two different colonial federal governments, speaking two different European languages, in addition to being four sovereign nations each with their own governments, who are revitalizing two different Nadowekian (Iroquoian) languages. This means that there are multiple language revitalization movements within the Wendat Confederacy, each with their own systems of spelling and pedagogy.

The Wendat Confederacy is an Indigenous group of four politically aligned nations with a shared ancestry. It spans the continent of North America, across the U.S.-Canada border and includes federally recognized and unrecognized tribes and bands.⁵ The four nations of the present-day Wendat Confederacy are: the Huronne-Wendat Nation (located in Wendake, Québec), the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation (Michigan/Ontario), the Wyandot of Kansas, and the Wyandotte of Oklahoma.⁶ There are two languages in the Wendat Confederacy: Wendat and Wa^adat, the former belonging to the Huronne-Wendat Nation in Québec, and the latter belonging to the other three nations.

After the Haudenosaunee attacks of 1649 caused the Wendat to disperse, roughly three hundred of them headed to the ancestral village of Stadacona (Québec City). Most likely the

⁵ In the United States, the legal term for a related Indigenous group or nation is *tribe*, while in Canada the term is *band*. These terms reflect the preference of the settler governments and not necessarily the Indigenous groups themselves.

⁶ The current iteration of the Wendat Confederacy was formed in 1999 at a major reburial ceremony in Ossosané; however, the confederacy of these associated nations has existed in different forms for hundreds of years and predates contact with the Europeans. The two nations with federal recognition are the Huronne-Wendat in Québec and the Wyandotte of Oklahoma.

Rope and/or Rock nation comprised the majority of this group, making their particular dialect of Wendat the new common tongue for the Wendat of Lorette.⁷ Loretteville is the modern location of the Wendake reserve, and as such, the Wendat people located there have sometimes been called the Loretan Wendats.

To embrace a Wendat perspective on their own history, it is important to treat all of these nations individually, as well as to include all of them in this discussion, despite their dispersal. Elders from every one of the nations as well as the Huronne-Wendat Band Council office have emphatically stressed this point to me, and I am listening. They are tied by kinship and shared history, yet were separated by forces of both colonialism and their own agency. A de-colonizing approach to this topic will consider the entire confederacy, not as a homogenous group, but as sovereign components. One of my main goals is to erase the erasure of distinct Native voices.

An essential part of this process is referring to Indigenous peoples by their self-determined names. The action of naming a people or a language holds significance. Although names are a small component of language, they are a symbol of the larger identity of a people, and describing an Indigenous language using its autonym, that is to say, the name of the language *in* its language, allows a language to be described on its own terms. Likewise for Indigenous history, using self-determined names and allowing community members to describe their own history via oral histories will restore a more ethical, accurate, and community-driven perspective to both the primary sources and the overall narrative.⁸ That is why this project

⁷ It is commonly believed among many Loretan Wendats that they descend from the nation of the Rock, but according to Dorais, the assertion about the Rope nation comes from a 1997 article by John Steckley entitled “Wendat Dialects and the development of the Huron alliance” in *Northeast Anthropology*. Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Yawenda: The Huron-Wendat Revive Their Language* research document 11, (Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones: Université Laval, Québec), 2014, pp. 51 and 93.

⁸ Wendat and Wyandot(te) are endonyms, whereas Huron(ne) is the exonym. The term Wendat will be used throughout to signify the group of people encompassed by the Wendat Confederacy, both historically and today.

declines to foreground *exonyms* which are names given to a group of people or geographical place by outsiders.⁹ In contrast, an *endonym* or *autonym* is a name that a group of people uses to describe themselves or where they live. The most commonly used endonyms in this project are: Wendat (Huron), Wyandot(te) (Huron), and Nadowekian (Iroquoian).¹⁰

The Languages: Wendat and Waⁿdat

The languages of the Wendat Confederacy have had a life and a history of their own. The history of the Wendat people since European contact could be viewed through the lens of that language history, in order to read European sources against the grain and find a Wendat perspective. Within the Wendat Confederacy, there are two languages, Wendat (*pronounced when-dot or Wayne-dot*) and Waⁿdat (*pronounced one-dot or Juan-dot*).¹¹ Whether Waⁿdat is a

“Wendat” will also be used to describe any Wendat language pre-dispersal or prior to the point when it becomes clear in the scholarship that separate languages are being recorded. Whenever statements are made about a particular component of the Wendat Confederacy, more specific terms will be used. Most commonly, this will include: Wyandot for the people living in the areas of Ontario, Michigan, Ohio, or Kansas, or Wyandotte for Wendat people living in Oklahoma. This choice is based on the names of their nations: the Wyandot of Anderdon, the Wyandot of Kansas, and the Wyandotte of Oklahoma. If a statement is referring to all of these people, or if the source does not make it clear which group, the term will be written “Wyandot(te).”

The language of the Wyandot(te) people has been previously referred to by the exonym, Huron, and is still currently referred to as Wyandot(te). However, following one vein of preferred orthography in the present, this same language will be spelled Waⁿdat throughout this project. This choice is based on how the speakers themselves pronounced it in the early twentieth century recordings taken by Canadian anthropologist Marius Barbeau. The orthography, or choice of how to write the word, comes from Barbeau himself and is preferred by Wyandot language revitalizer, Richard Zane Smith and linguist Dr. Craig Kopris.

⁹ When exonyms appear in this project, they will be listed in parentheses next to the preferred endonyms, as an aid to the reader as exonyms are usually the more commonly known term—which in and of itself is a powerful statement on how scholarship and common discourse have treated Indigenous people. Examples of the two most common exonyms in this project are: Huron and Iroquoian.

¹⁰ Nadowekian is in fact an Algonquian term referring to what are commonly called the Iroquoian culture and language group; it is not a Wendat word. However, because the Wendat word for this term is as of yet unknown, Huron-Wendat historian Georges Sioui proposed the use of “Nadowek(ian)” or “Nadouek” in French in 1999 in his book, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle*. The fact that it is a geographically relevant Indigenous term makes it preferable to an exonym.

¹¹ The pronunciation of Waⁿdat here is based on a recording of one of the last Waⁿdat speakers, Sarah Dushane, in the 1960s, which is located in the archives at the Museum of Canadian History in Québec, but I received an mp3 copy from Richard Zane Smith and Craig Kopris. How it became the three syllable word, Wyandot, is still up for debate. The old pronunciation for Wendat is still debated as well, because the French, from whom we have the

dialect of Wendat or its own language is still debated among language scholars. For the purposes of respecting the distinct life these languages have had, I will be referring to them as two languages. Among the four nations in the confederacy, the Huronne-Wendat Nation of Québec is the only one who today identifies with the Wendat language. The other three nations, Wyandot of Anderdon, Wyandot of Kansas, and Wyandotte of Oklahoma, identify with the Waⁿdat language.

Much of the documentation of the language and the Wendat Confederacy comes from the early contact period (the sixteenth through the early eighteenth century), as recorded by the French Recollect and Jesuit missionaries. All of their writings center on the Wendat language, so not much is known about when Waⁿdat became a separate language (or a dialect), or whether the Jesuits failed to differentiate the two languages.¹² From what I have seen, the first time the term Waⁿdat was first mentioned as a separate language in scholarship was in the ethnography work of Marius Barbeau in 1911-12.¹³

Written documentation places the beginning of this language story in the early sixteenth century. European first contact with the Wendat people occurred in 1534, making the trajectory of Wendats' relationship with Europeans about as long as the Indigenous people of Mexico and Central America. Roughly fifteen years after the Spaniard Hernán Cortés invaded the city of Tenochtitlán (modern Mexico City), the French navigator Jacques Cartier met Wendat people at

earliest written record of the language, utilized various spellings. Thanks to Dr. Craig Kopsis for the conversation on this.

¹² It should be noted that the historical documents most commonly refer to the language as “Huron” (the exonym, making the distinction between Wendat and Waⁿdat even more vague), except in some of the oldest sources which used the French phonetic spelling, “Ouendat” and occasionally “Wendat.”

¹³ Marius Barbeau, *Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives In Translations and Native Texts*, National Museum of Canada, Bulletin 165, Anthropological Series No. 47, (Canada: Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, 1960); Barbeau, C. Marius. *Huron and Wyandot Mythology, With an Appendix Containing Earlier Published Records*. Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915. Barbeau travelled to all four nations of the Confederacy in the early twentieth century to conduct an ethnographic survey that focused on the languages. The wax cylinder recordings he took of speakers and singers are housed in the archives at the Canadian Museum of History (formerly the Canadian Museum of Civilization) in Gatineau, Québec.

the villages of Stadacona (modern Québec City) and Hochelaga (modern Montréal).¹⁴ It was in this early contact period with the French that Cartier heard the old Wendat word, *kanata*, which translates to “village,” and eventually became the name for the whole country of Canada. Donnacona, chief of Stadacona, welcomed Cartier and his men to their village near the Saint-Lawrence River.¹⁵

Wendat was the lingua franca of the Great Lakes region during the contact period with Europeans, but the French were not the only people learning and using Wendat. As Georges Sioui pointed out in *Huron-Wendat: Heritage of the Circle*, this fact was clear to the Recollect priest Gabriel Sagard in 1623. In 1635, the Jesuit priest Le Jeune stated in his report back to Paris that Wendat was commonly used by twelve other nations, mostly Nadowekian (Iroquoian) speakers.¹⁶ Sioui states that Wendat was also spoken by multiple Algonkian (a.k.a. Algonquian) nations and at least one Oceti Sakowin (Sioux) nation.

The unique attributes of the Wendat language which differentiate it from French were outlined by Jean de Brébeuf in a 1635 Relation, where he called the language “very complete and very regular.”¹⁷ He noted that the language had no labial consonants (because speakers

¹⁴ For more information on how the villages of Stadacona and Hochelaga are related to Wendat ancestry, see: Jean-François Richard, “Territorial Precedence in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Huron-Wendat Oral Tradition,” in *Ontario Archaeology Journal: Multidisciplinary Investigations into Huron-Wendat and St. Lawrence Iroquoian Connections*, Neha Gupta and Louis Lesage, eds., No. 96, (2016), pp. 26-34.

¹⁵ Jacques Cartier, 1491-1557, and H. P. (Henry Percival,) 1872-1938 Biggar, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier: Published From the Originals With Translations, Notes And Appendices*, (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, printer, 1924); Georges Sioui, trans. Jane Brierley. *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), p. 93; Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Yawenda: The Huron-Wendat Revive Their Language* research document 11, (Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones: Université Laval, Québec), 2014.

¹⁶ Georges Sioui, trans. Jane Brierley, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), p. 97. The quote from Le Jeune that he is using comes from the Jesuit Relations (8: 115).

¹⁷ Georges Sioui, *Huron-Wendat*, *ibid*, p. 97. Sioui is quoting Brébeuf (JR 8: 115). “Relation” is a shorthand for one of the more than 70 volumes of the Jesuit Relations. The title only gets italicized when citing a specific translation, such as the case with the Reuben Thwaites *Jesuit Relations* around the turn of the 20th century. See: Micah True, *Masters and Students: Jesuit Mission Ethnography in Seventeenth-Century New France*, (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).

seemed to never close their lips), that verbs were conjugated differently based on the subject's animacy, and he was surprised that Wendat had a different conjugation for the feminine, because in French verb conjugations do not change based on gender. For example, for the verb *aller* "to go," the conjugations for "she goes" and "he goes" are *elle va* and *il va*; there is no change in the *va*.¹⁸ From these last two facts we can infer that animacy state and the presence of women were notable in Wendat life. Moreover, both Wendat and Waⁿdat are verb-based languages (English and French revolve around nouns), so this particular attention to the feminine and animate states of things would have been ever-expressed. These attributes of the Wendat Confederacy languages help make a Wendat worldview distinct from a Europeanized worldview, which is essential to rendering their history on their own terms.

Canadian ethnolinguist John L. Steckley has been researching the history and languages of the Wendat Confederacy for over forty years. His volume of work in this field is probably the largest since the Jesuits' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This contribution was not lost on Huron-Wendat community members who gave him the name Hechon, which had been the Huron name given to the Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf in the seventeenth century.¹⁹ He was given another name, Tehaondechoren ("he who splits the country in two"), when he was adopted by Janeth English into the Wyandot of Kansas nation in 1999.²⁰

Steckley's analysis is unique because of his knowledge of both the Wendat and Waⁿdat languages and because he examined Jesuit sources which were not published in the Jesuit

¹⁸ Georges Sioui, *Huron-Wendat*, *ibid*, p. 98.

¹⁹ Brébeuf acted as an ethnographer and linguist of a fashion for the Wendat people he was living among. It was one of my interview collaborators, Linda Sioui, who named Steckley, along with her language class who took a workshop with him between 1995-1999. Here I'm using "Huron" because it matches the source material from that era, and because Steckley has used it sometimes.

²⁰ This information comes from a personal conversation I had with Dr. Steckley.

Relations. These were documents sent between the Jesuit missions in New France but were never sent back to Paris. According to Bruce Trigger, these sources included “manuscript dictionaries, grammars, and religious texts prepared in the Huron language,” and provide a more honest account of how the Jesuits perceived Wendat culture. They also show “to what degree [the Jesuits] were linguistically capable of conveying Christian theological concepts to the Huron.”²¹ Steckley expanded this conversation in *De Religione: Telling the Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Story in Huron to the Iroquois*.

In *De Religione*, Steckley provides a new translation of “the longest text ever written in the Wendat language.”²² The original text was written by a French-speaking Jesuit missionary, meant to be a tool to aid in converting the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) to Christianity.²³ Steckley dates the text to sometime between 1669 and 1673.²⁴ The author, probably Belgian Father Philippe Pierson, was using the Wendat language because the Jesuits had established missions among the Wendat and had learned their language, which the Haudenosaunee also understood. There isn’t any documented context for how the original text was used, but Steckley says, “I assume that new missionaries wrote it out as part of their lessons in learning Iroquoian languages and that sections were used as homilies or sermons or for one-on-one religious instruction.”²⁵ One important benefit of reading *De Religione* is that unlike the Jesuit Relations, it was not sent

²¹ Bruce Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660*, (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), xxix.

²² John L. Steckley, *De Religione: Telling the Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Story in Huron to the Iroquois*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), p. 3. The original seventeenth-century document was fifty-three pages.

²³ John L. Steckley, *De Religione, ibid*, p. 3. Haudenosaunee is the endonym for the people who are also known as the Iroquois (this more commonly known exonym was a French misunderstanding of an Algonkian word that had to do with snakes). Their confederacy is based on Wendat teachings; for more on that, look up information about Hiawatha and the Great Peacemaker (Dekanawidah), who was Wendat (Huron). The six nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy today include: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora - though the latter would not have been part of the Confederacy at the time this Jesuit document was being produced.

²⁴ John L. Steckley, *De Religione, ibid*, p. 6.

²⁵ John L. Steckley, *De Religione, ibid*, p. 3.

back to Europe for review by church superiors holding the purse strings. It provides a rare, unfiltered, on-the-ground glimpse of the work of the Jesuits in New France and their relationship with the Aboriginal peoples they were interacting with.²⁶ *De Religione* is also unique in that it is situated so early in the contact period, whereas much of the other linguistic documents studied for Nadowekian (Iroquoian) languages “come from much later times, after Native speakers had experienced centuries of contact and some assimilation.”²⁷

De Religione can be looked at as a syncretic text, combining European spiritualism with the culture and beliefs of Indigenous people in New France in the seventeenth century. While its original mission was religious conversion, this text “also bears the verbal soul of the Wendat language.”²⁸ In order to bridge the two cultures, the author used the Wendat language, which in itself encodes aspects of culture and beliefs. He also had to use what he knew of Wendat beliefs to try and translate Christianity to the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois). The historical significance of *De Religione* to this project is three-fold: it shows that other Indigenous communities understood the Wendat language in this period, it provides a substantial text in the original Wendat to be analyzed by language scholars, and Steckley’s modern translation, which is based on decades of work in the language and in the community, sheds new light on the historical narrative.

Linguist Craig Kopriv’s Dissertation on Waⁿdat: A Grammar and Dictionary of Wyandot

Dr. Craig Alexander Kopriv is a linguist who specializes in Indigenous languages, primarily Nadowekian (Iroquoian), as well as Eastern Virginia Algonquin, in conjunction with

²⁶ John L. Steckley, *De Religione, ibid*, p. 7.

²⁷ John L. Steckley, *De Religione, ibid*, p. 8.

²⁸ John L. Steckley, *De Religione, ibid*, p. 7.

his language work for all three seasons of the Sky TV series, *Jamestown*.²⁹ Before that, he was working as the tribal linguist for the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma, until Dr. John Steckley succeeded him in the role in April of 2015. He wrote his linguistics dissertation, *A Grammar and Dictionary of Wyandot*, in 2001.³⁰

Kopris has utilized comparative linguistic methods to compare the grammar, vocabulary, and usage of other languages in the Nadowekian (Iroquoian) language family such as Onödowá'ga: (Seneca), Gayogohó:nq' (Cayuga), or Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), to improve his data on the Waⁿdat language. Linguists in other fields have used his method, in addition to other Nadowekianists (Iroquoianists) such as Dr. Marianne Mithun of the University of California Santa Barbara.³¹

Notably, Kopris developed his own Qwerty keyboard with the specific symbols for the Waⁿdat language which I have utilized throughout this paper, such as the superscript ⁿ. Imagine writing in the French language utilizing only an English keyboard from the United States, with none of the appropriate accent marks, which may change meaning or accuracy, and would certainly complicate etymology; this is the implication of ignoring the characters that allow for a full expression of the Wendat language.

The main primary source that Kopris refers to is Marius Barbeau, who was a Canadian anthropologist. Barbeau visited all four Wendat and Wyandot(te) communities in 1911 and 1912,

²⁹ Eastern Virginia Algonquin is the language spoken by members of the Powhatan Confederacy, including the Pamunkey and Chickahominy. The *Jamestown* TV series focuses on the English colony from 1619-1622 and its relations with the Powhatan Confederacy. It is a notable leap forward for representations of Native people because the actors representing both Powhatan and English people speak the Indigenous language that would have been spoken in this location and time period. Dr. Kopris also had a hand in choosing Native names for some characters. Others, such as Opechencanough and Chacrow, are actual historical figures.

³⁰ Craig Kopris, "A Grammar and Dictionary of Wyandot," PhD diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2001.

³¹ Louis-Jacques Dorais and Jonathan Lainey, eds., *Wendat and Wyandot Then and Now*, (Wendake, Québec: Les éditions Hannelorak, 2013). Marianne Mithun, Craig Kopris, and Richard Zane Smith all have articles in this.

collecting audio recordings on wax cylinders of Waⁿdat speakers such as Smith Nichols and Catherine Johnson, as well as documenting some of the last living Wendat speakers such as Prosper Vincent.³² Barbeau also recorded many Wyandot(te) traditional stories in the Waⁿdat language, as told by elders, into a written compilation entitled, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology, With an Appendix Containing Earlier Published Records*, originally published in 1915.³³ Barbeau's documentation of the language is the preferred account used by both Koprís and Richard Zane Smith.³⁴

According to Koprís' research, the last speakers of Waⁿdat were living in the 1960s. Koprís lists some of the problematic aspects of using Barbeau as a linguistic source. He lists a lack of consistency in the orthography, as well as "ambiguous and inconsistent word boundaries, interfering with morphological analysis."³⁵ The word "morphological" comes from *morphemes*, which are the smaller components that linguists break sounds and words into. The boundaries of these morphemes might be broken up based on sound profile or by syllable. Essentially, Koprís is arguing that Barbeau wasn't consistent in how he broke up sounds into words. Because linguists analyze these smaller components to infer the meaning of words they don't know based on which ones they do know, inconsistent word boundaries can be frustrating for someone analyzing a language to infer its rules and meanings. For an example of Koprís' critique of Barbeau's inconsistency, it would be the difference between *readingthissentence*, *rea din gthi sentence*, *reedng thssentince*, or *reading this sentence*, if the author used a different one of those options each time.

³² These recordings are currently housed in the archives at the Museum of Civilization in Ontario, Canada.

³³ C. Marius Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology, With an Appendix Containing Earlier Published Records*, Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915.

³⁴ This is based on several personal conversations with each of them.

³⁵ Craig Koprís, "A Grammar and Dictionary of Wyandot," PhD diss., p. xxi.

Kopris argues that “Wyandot is not a daughter language of Wendat (Huron), but rather a sister language, probably Tionontati (Petun, Tobacco).”³⁶ One explanation for this finding could be because, as Kopris states, his dissertation is taking a synchronic approach, rather than the more common diachronic approach. More specifically, he is zooming in on the Waⁿdat language at the snapshot in time when Barbeau was conducting his interviews (synchronic), rather than focusing on the overall trajectory of the language over time (diachronic). At the point when Barbeau was conducting interviews in the early twentieth century, the Wyandot peoples had been spatially dispersed from the Wendat for over two hundred years. If Waⁿdat had been a dialect of Wendat to begin with, the physical isolation across two centuries may have augmented existing differences, making them sound like two different languages.

Methodology

Oral histories are at the heart of my methodology for this project. Because I am aware that the term “ethnography” triggers historical trauma within the Wendat community, I instead chose to conduct oral histories and utilize that term. From my perspective, oral histories allow more leeway for the person being interviewed to direct their own narrative and have personal agency over their contribution. I kept my set of questions short and very open, so that each interview collaborator had enough space to shape the story from their perspective.³⁷ By conducting these interviews, I am creating an archive of Wendat perspectives on language

³⁶ Craig Kopris, “A Grammar and Dictionary of Wyandot,” p. xxi.

³⁷ Thank you to Dr. Todd Holmes at the UC Berkeley Oral History Center for helping me craft my first set of interview questions.

revitalization. The audio and my written transcripts will be provided to the archive of choice for each participant, consistent with my methodology of community-engaged research.³⁸

By community-engaged research I mean research that puts the needs and desires of community members before the individual scholar's agenda. It is by far a more challenging and slower route than traditional research, but I made an active choice to design the research this way in order to try to address and counteract historical trauma. This method brings community perspectives to the forefront, while working towards building a more positive bridge between researchers and Indigenous communities. This technique often involves rejecting traditional notions of scholarship that privilege the research question rather than the community.³⁹ The challenge of this style of scholarship is that the researcher must act as a shield, advocate, and bridge for the community's desires in relation to the institutions' interests.

Language acquisition is the other main component of my methodology. I began learning both languages of the Wendat Confederacy, Wendat and Waⁿdat, in the Fall of 2018. The immediate effect of this experience was that I began to read our historical documents in a totally different light. I became much more skeptical about the authority that European sources carried,

³⁸ The archive won't be stored all in one place—which seems inconvenient, but the reasoning for that is I'm allowing the community collaborators who give interviews to decide where their interview gets archived. It is right that future researchers should go to the places which were close to the speakers in order to gain information that is as closely tied to them as possible. For example, if Richard Zane Smith wants his interview archived in Oklahoma, future researchers will need to visit where he was living at the time of our interview in order to access an original copy in person. This stands in sharp contrast to the California Language Archive at UC Berkeley which until recently, was somewhat unknown to the very communities who had provided the primary source material upon which the archive was built. The website for the California Language Archive at UC Berkeley is here: <https://cla.berkeley.edu/>.

³⁹ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience in the Lives of Contemporary Native Americans: Reclaiming Our Balance, Restoring Our Wellbeing*, (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 142. Weaver includes the term "community-based participatory research (CBPR)" which is just another more specific way of saying community-engaged research. Before seeing it in this book, I only knew about this practice from word-of-mouth, but now seeing this term I was able to Google it and find that it has been written about. The way Weaver describes it makes it sound like Native students are engaging their own culture in their research, but from what I know of it, it can apply to any researcher, even an ally.

and disappointed as I collided with the realization that I spent so much time learning a historical narrative that was probably far more inaccurate than I had originally realized. It felt like I had woken up in a farce. If French historians must learn French and Russian historians must learn Russian, why shouldn't historians of Indigenous cultures be expected to learn that community's language? I would argue that this is an important question that the field of history and all historians of Indigenous cultures should be asking. The consistent double standards puts the responsibility on Indigenous communities to communicate with researchers, when the privilege of the research institution should be leveraged to counteract the historical trauma these communities have already endured.

It is my belief that in order to present a more accurate and ethical historical narrative, historians who research Indigenous people should have a working knowledge of that people's language, as well as a familiarity with the implications of historical trauma on Indigenous populations. For this reason, I have made the decision to prioritize language acquisition as part of this project which began in 2017 and will continue through my Master's degree. An Indigenous perspective of history is not achievable through settler-only (re: non-Indigenous) sources, so it is necessary to build an archive of community-perspective sources.

Theoretical Framework

There are four bodies of scholarship that have formed my approach to this project: settler colonialism, historical trauma, oral history, and language revitalization. My methodology builds off the scholarship in these four critical areas, reinforcing my belief that a study of the languages

themselves and their revitalization movements is crucial to the topic of Indigenous history and finding the Wendat perspective of historical narratives.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is the ongoing process by which people who are not Indigenous to an area move into Indigenous spaces, either displacing the original inhabitants or setting in motion a process of assimilation or acculturation via coercive and often violent tactics. The structures of settler colonialism have had enormous impacts on Indigenous people and the way their histories are told. It is one of the key causes of historical trauma. According to preeminent scholar of settler colonialism Patrick Wolfe, “settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event...elimination is an organizing principal [*sic*] of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence...Settler colonialism destroys to replace.”⁴⁰ One component of Indigenous culture that is most frequently destroyed, lost, or diminished due to this process is language. European languages begin to replace original languages, as in the case with Wendat and Waⁿdat being replaced with French and English, respectively.

The historical blood quantum laws, created by the United States federal government to determine who gets to claim Indian status based on their percentage of “Indian blood,” is an ongoing example of a settler-colonial structure that contributed heavily to language loss. Originally created to decrease the number of Native Americans within the United States through miscegenation, the blood quantum law assisted the federal government in depriving Native Americans of their lands and Indian status, generation by generation, dissociating Native people

⁴⁰ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 21, 2006): 388.

from their language communities. The 1952 Urban Indian Relocation Program and Indian Relocation Act of 1956 furthered the government's agenda to dispossess Native people of their land and eliminate the Native through assimilation.⁴¹ After moving to urban areas away from the ancestral lands or reservation, Native people were immersed in an English-language world.⁴²

The extermination of Indigenous people has always had a direct tie to the ability of white settlers to claim themselves as the original inhabitants of these lands. The appropriation of Native identity is a way for settlers to try on this future vision that they see as a foregone conclusion. By adopting parts of Native culture as their own, settlers are constructing a new blended identity for themselves that includes an indigenous claim to the land. According to settler colonialism theorist Lorenzo Veracini, cultural appropriation has roots in the desire for land and the need for settlers to absolve themselves of the blame for genocide through a term he coined called "settler disavowal." It denies surviving Indigenous people a recognition of what Lorenzo Veracini calls the "founding violence" that they experienced at the hands of settlers, which is part of an overall defensive mechanism of settler disavowal (of responsibility for racism and genocide, among other things).⁴³ Settler disavowal contributes to historical trauma by

⁴¹ The Relocation program was created by Dillon S. Myer who implemented the Japanese-American internment camps in World War II.

⁴² Because I live within the continental United States, I tend to use the terms "Indigenous" and "Native" interchangeably, the one exception is when I'm speaking of Indigenous people outside of the lower 48, where the term Indigenous is more applicable. Technically, these terms are different and Indigenous people within the contiguous U.S. are the one place where their meanings overlap. "Native Americans" are Indigenous people from the continental U.S. area. "Native Alaskans" are specifically native to the land now called Alaska. "Native Hawaiians" are also Pacific Islanders, sometimes referred to by the acronym, NHPI. Within the borders of Canada, they utilize three distinct terms: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis; French-speaking Canada uses an umbrella term, "autochtones," while English-speaking Canada uses the umbrella term, "Aboriginal," which applies to Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia, too. However, Indigenous is a global umbrella term, hence the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

⁴³ Lorenzo Veracini, "Settler collective, founding violence and disavowal: the settler colonial situation," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29, no. 4, (2008): 363–379. Also see: Lorenzo Veracini, "Chapter 3: Consciousness—Disavowal, non-encounter" in *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

normalizing the violence of ethnic cleansing practiced by settlers, treating it as a foregone conclusion in the name of “progress” (think Manifest Destiny) and setting the narrative of history on an inevitable linear trajectory from Indigenous to globalization. In this narrative, Indigenous people are denied the very basic tenets of Indigenous identity, including language, if they want to be viewed as *here*, as part of the present, instead of viewed at *then*, frozen in a past that is archaic or even dead.

Historical Trauma

During the initial contact period with Europeans in eastern Canada and the Great Lakes region, there were at least 30,000 people in the Wendat Confederacy.⁴⁴ By the beginning of the Wendat dispersal period in 1650, one-half to two-thirds of the Wendat had died due to war, famine, and European diseases. Those who remained strategically dispersed themselves in different directions.⁴⁵ One percent of the original population became the three hundred of my Huronne-Wendat ancestors who traveled all the way to the ancestral village of Stadacona, what is now known as Québec City. You can imagine how traumatic this experience would be. First, the population dropped drastically which involved losing so many of the people you love, then having to scatter yourselves from your personal network and go your separate ways in order to survive, and finally relocating to an ancestral village almost a thousand miles away which is now inhabited by strangers.

⁴⁴ Georges Sioui, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle*, *ibid*, p. 87; Kathryn Magee Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed: A History of the Seventeenth-Century Wendat People*, Vancouver: (UBC Press, 2013), p. 2; Kathryn Magee Labelle and Thomas Peace, eds., *From Huronia to Wendakes: Adversity, Migrations and Resilience 1650-1900*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), p. 4.

⁴⁵ Kathryn Magee Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed*, *ibid*.

This project adopts a trauma-informed lens in order to understand how the effects of settler colonialism impact a Wendat perspective of history. Published in 2019, Hilary Weaver's *Trauma and Resilience in the Lives of Contemporary Native Americans* provides a thorough Indigenous-specific overview of historical trauma—the causes and a historiography of the scholarship, with a lens towards healing.⁴⁶ This fits directly into my methodology because any topic involving Indigenous people should utilize a trauma-informed lens.⁴⁷

Historical trauma is defined as “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma,” such as genocide, for example.⁴⁸ Other related terms include: intergenerational trauma, transgenerational trauma, and colonial trauma response.⁴⁹ Historical trauma has been linked to PTSD, anxiety, depression, and other illnesses.⁵⁰ This concept has existed in the Indigenous community for a

⁴⁶ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience in the Lives of Contemporary Native Americans: Reclaiming Our Balance, Restoring Our Wellbeing*, (New York: Routledge, 2019). Weaver most wants readers to walk away with a trauma-informed perspective, so that more empathy and therefore a higher quality of care can be provided for trauma survivors.

⁴⁷ The greatest strength of Weaver's book is that she presents a wealth of information on several topics in Indigenous country today from an Indigenous perspective and in a condensed format, in addition to presenting why a western worldview is having adverse effects on the community. The in-community social term is usually "Indian Country," and this is based on the legal term for Native land which is enshrined in U.S. treaties. However, it is distasteful for the word "Indian" to be used in formal scholarship because it is an exonym of the highest order. When Christopher Columbus landed in the Caribbean for the first time in 1492, he truly thought he was either in India or Asia (he makes several references to the Emperor of *Chipangu* or Japan, whom he continually expects to run into). Even though people present on this first voyage with Columbus already knew he was incorrect, the term *indios*, translated in English to "Indians," stuck around, culminating in Europeans referring to this area as "the West Indies" for a very long time. (Note: the East Indies is in fact the actual country of India, where actual Indians live). Europeans and their descendants then ignorantly and disrespectfully continued to mis-label Indigenous people throughout the massive landmass that is North and South America for five hundred years, and many insist on using this term still today. In the author's opinion, use of the term "Indian" by someone outside of the Native community reflects a lack of deep critical thought on its historical implications for erasure and trauma. While not wishing to disrespect the "Pan-Indian" activism of the twentieth century in any way, it is now time to tap into the conversation of how this term originated and the harm it has caused. Therefore, I will only use "Indian" when it directly reflects the original source being quoted.

⁴⁸ This definition is by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart; Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, pp. 8, 14.

⁵⁰ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, pp. 14, 18, 21-22, 166.

very long time; however, it didn't commonly appear in publications until the mid-1990s, with the work of Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart.⁵¹

Omitting mentions of trauma in the Indigenous community has its own consequences. The effects of Veracini's *settler disavowal* are expressed in the Native American population as *disenfranchised grief* which "results when losses are not publicly voiced or acknowledged."⁵² Weaver provides an example of disenfranchised grief which has a direct implication on the historical discipline: when "the massive population decimation resulting from colonization is often omitted from history texts or dismissed as irrelevant."⁵³

Central to the topic of language revitalization is the definition of historical loss, which "involves expending cognitive resources thinking about the consequences and impact of multiple losses associated with colonization...[and] can involve dwelling on the consequences of forced acculturation and relocation with a negative repetitive thinking style."⁵⁴ During the boarding school era, nuns and priests waged war against Indigenous students speaking their languages by "penetrating their tongues with sewing needles for speaking their native languages."⁵⁵ Weaver cites a Canadian study which linked "Indigenous language fluency...with lower suicide rates in a study of 196 bands in British Columbia."⁵⁶ Since language loss is embedded in historical trauma, "learning some language, even if not to the point of fluency, can be empowering" and begin a healing process.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 8.

⁵² Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 13.

⁵³ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 46.

⁵⁶ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 28.

⁵⁷ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 175.

Historical trauma manifests in the mind as well as the physical body; it has been “linked to chronic diseases and poor mental health, and it may help explain undiagnosed chronic pain...It has also been identified as part of the explanatory framework for disproportionate rates of substance misuse, violence, and suicide in Native American communities.”⁵⁸ Native Americans frequently encounter discrimination when working with health professionals which is why trauma-informed care—of people and historical narratives—is important.

One proposed cause of transgenerational trauma transmission is *epigenetics*, which explores how genes can be altered by external experiences of trauma and inherited by the next generation.⁵⁹ Epigenetics is a theory which “proposes that genes carry memories of ancestral trauma and this influences how individuals react to contemporary trauma and stress.”⁶⁰ In a 2015 study about healing historical trauma, elders interviewed believed that trauma was genetic and passed down that way; they also saw historical trauma as the root of internalized oppression and linked it to language loss.⁶¹

Historical trauma theory, which was “originally developed to explain the residual impact of the Jewish Holocaust on the children of survivors” was later applied to any community that has experienced colonization, oppression, and genocide.⁶² In *The Inheritors: Moving Forward from Generational Trauma*, Gita Arian Baack explores cross-cultural similarities in historical trauma, as well as epigenetic transmission.⁶³ Baack’s parents were survivors of the Jewish

⁵⁸ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 153.

⁵⁹ *Transgenerational* trauma is the effects of historical trauma when transmitted across multiple generations. *Intergenerational* trauma, which is more commonly used, in fact only encompasses historical trauma transmitted from one generation to the next.

⁶⁰ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, p. 23.

⁶¹ Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, pp. 12-13.

⁶² Hilary N. Weaver, *Trauma and Resilience*, *ibid*, pp. 13.

⁶³ Gita Arian Baack, Ph.D., *The Inheritors: Moving Forward from Generational Trauma*. (She Writes Press: Berkeley, 2016).

Holocaust. Baack defines her unique term, “Inheritors of trauma...as the generations of people who, consciously or unconsciously, have thoughts and feelings about devastating events that happened when they were very young or before they were born, or that may even go back to earlier generations.”⁶⁴ Her analysis of epigenetics is as follows:

“...it seeks to identify the mechanisms by which traumatic stress may permanently alter the molecules, neurons, cells, and genes of survivors in ways that are passed on to their descendants. This means that a surprising number of children of survivors may be less able to metabolize stress...unlike their parents, descendants have higher-than-normal levels of the cortisol-busting enzyme, while still having higher levels of cortisol. This suggests that the offspring of Holocaust survivors are less vulnerable to hunger but more vulnerable to the effects of stress, and they are more likely to experience symptoms of PTSD.”⁶⁵

Indigenous populations of Canada and the U.S. suffered extreme forms of trauma due to genocide and settler colonialism. Baack summarizes the work of historian David E. Stannard in his seminal *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*, as he explores the trauma wrought by settler colonialism and what action must be taken in order to heal. Between the research of Baack and Stannard, overall Indigenous population losses post-contact range from 90-95%.⁶⁶ Baack summarizes Stannard’s recommendation for healing as a call for recognition, perspective, and a truthful reckoning of historical narratives: “we need to find out ‘what was crushed and what was butchered’ and that missing information must be filled in before recovery

⁶⁴ Gita Arian Baack, Ph.D., *The Inheritors*, *ibid*, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Gita Arian Baack, Ph.D., *The Inheritors*, *ibid*, p. 154.

⁶⁶ Gita Arian Baack, Ph.D., *The Inheritors*, *ibid*, pp. 17-21.

can take place.”⁶⁷ That vital “missing information” is Indigenous language and a new perspective on historical narratives that derive from the Indigenous communities they purport to describe.

Indigenous Oral History

Vital to a Wendat perspective of history is the practice of oral history within the context of the Indigenous community, which is often different from how westernized scholarship defines it.⁶⁸ My methodology aims to discover how oral histories can be used in a healing way to counteract historical trauma and support language revitalization. In *Rethinking Oral History & Tradition: An Indigenous Perspective*, Ngāti Porou author Nēpia Mahuika said, “as a historian trained in Western methods, theories, and historiographies, my native perspective or ‘articulation’ presents various challenges to the established mainstream views of oral history.”⁶⁹ Traditional Western scholarship tends to criticize oral history and tradition for being inaccurate because it’s not written down and therefore may be revised each time it is transmitted, when in fact the very nature of a written historical narrative changes with each generation of thought leaders who take new modern perspectives on the past, hence the practice of historiography.

Oral history and oral tradition are typically treated as “two distinctively different fields” by non-Indigenous academics. The former involves a method of “co-constructed interviews, life narratives, and an interpretive mode of analysing stories captured via analog or digital recordings,” akin to an ethnography, while the latter consists of stories passed down the generations which rely on human memory and are not recorded in a written way, akin to

⁶⁷ Gita Arian Baack, Ph.D., *The Inheritors*, *ibid*, p. 21.

⁶⁸ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition: An Indigenous Perspective*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 1.

⁶⁹ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition: An Indigenous Perspective*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 1.

storytelling.⁷⁰ But according to Mahuika, these definitions are not centered in an Indigenous perspective, wherein an Indigenous definition of oral history “provide[s] new ways of thinking about the discipline, its methods, political aims, theories, and the form of oral sources.”⁷¹

There is a difference between research and analysis conducted by an insider, defined as someone who is conducting research within their own community and kinship network, versus an outsider, particularly a non-Indigenous researcher. The stakes are much higher for an insider and different from the responsibility felt by an outsider, so the bar for accuracy and sensitivity in an insider’s scholarship is higher.

“An ‘inside’ perspective is crucial and culturally appropriate because the native politics that shape my world empower me to speak on behalf of my ancestors, but not on behalf of other and all indigenous communities...This is a particular type of indigenous ethics in practice: we speak for ourselves, yet our various tribal histories and experiences resonate and often align with other native peoples.”⁷²

This insider perspective or expertise consists of more tangible and intangible elements than an outsider will have access to. For example, as a non-enrolled descendant, someone whose identity resides in the grey area between insider and outsider, I had to go through steps to gain permission from one nation to interview enrolled citizens. Community members were sometimes skeptical of non-enrolled descendants because their ancestors sometimes lost enrollment status for reasons that were traumatic to the community, and thus could be less open with me. However, my status as a descendant and my personal record of community involvement acted as a resume of trust for other participants, who spoke to me in an in-community way. Thus, it might be a more

⁷⁰ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 1.

⁷¹ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, pp. 1-2.

⁷² Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 2.

appropriate role for an outsider to highlight individuals in a community who are already providing public-facing work that needs more visibility, and where collaboration is appropriate, to share authorship with the community members who have provided vital primary source material. However, none of these factors have a finite formula. Each project and relationship between researcher and community needs to be navigated in a way that is tailor-made.

“Indigenous definitions require more than a crude or basic overview or blanket assumption about how all native peoples operate...It is a lifetime of osmosis and personal growth, not a year or a decade of university research, that is embedded in this perspective.”⁷³

There is an inherent power dynamic at play between an interviewer and the person providing the interview, skewed in favor of the researcher conducting the interview. When I went through the process with the Huronne-Wendat band council in Wendake, it was expressed to me that the one-sided power relationship has been their most common experience, so they are no longer giving outsiders permission to conduct research on their reserve or with their citizens. I am extremely grateful to have had my research process approved by the band council.

Indigenous communities rarely receive a copy of whatever scholarship was made with their assistance, nor does the scholarship produced typically benefit the community. What this means for subsequent researchers is that many Indigenous communities are tired of helping outsiders build their own career in what feels like a one-sided relationship. Mahuika stated that “as a student of history I came to understand the significance of that process, and how it is connected to control, ownership, and power.”⁷⁴ In an effort to maintain or regain some of that

⁷³ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 5.

power over the historical narrative, some Indigenous groups have been extremely selective about who has access to community cultural sources and expressed “concern that in the wrong hands...the information might be used inappropriately.”⁷⁵

The national historical narrative in Aotearoa (New Zealand) reflects that of Canada and the U.S., being “ironically a mythic tale of settlement and becoming” which follows a stock storyline of what’s deemed Western progress, taking a virgin and sparsely-populated terra nullius “from wilderness to frontier” to faux unity.⁷⁶ Mainstream historical narratives, whether presented in the classroom or through media, have relegated oral histories to the realm of prehistory.⁷⁷ This contributes to a societal perception that anything traditionally Native belongs in the past, effectively erasing the possibility of a Native identity in the present, and not leaving a spot open for Native identity in society.

Indigenous oral history and tradition are transmitted from generation to generation through the language itself. For example, children learn where they can and cannot play by learning the names for places.⁷⁸ This shows how language is intrinsically tied into history and culture, and to remove it is to begin to unravel the whole and take it out of context.

When describing the relationship between the interviewer and the person being interviewed, the term “collaborator” is a more empowering title than “informant.”⁷⁹ It also reflects more accurately the contribution of a community member versus the researcher. The power often resides with the researcher who is gathering information from collaborators who,

⁷⁵ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 132.

⁷⁶ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 11.

⁷⁷ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, pp. 10-11; Juliana Barr, “There’s No Such Thing as ‘Prehistory’: What the Longue Durée of Caddo and Pueblo History Tells Us about Colonial America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (May 3, 2017): 203–40.

⁷⁸ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, pp. 48-50.

⁷⁹ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 129.

because of their social status, may not have had the same benefit of education or access to resources; yet, without the participation of the collaborators, the research would not be able to exist. When it comes time to publish, the researcher receives intellectual credit and possibly career clout, when some of their most critical content was gathered in these interviews.

Learning a community's language was a tactic employed by early ethnographers as a strategy to complete colonization. However, language learning or simply being physically present in a community "are insufficient to acquiring an understanding if the aim and focus is applied from elsewhere."⁸⁰ What makes the difference is the *intentions* of the researcher. In an interview situation, "it is the observer who retains power, even if it is seemingly 'silenced during the interactive process.'"⁸¹ The traditional ethnographic approach of taking down field notes and then making a write up after leaves the interpretation of the data itself entirely in the hands of the (more powerful) researcher. Conversely, a community-engaged researcher who records oral histories allows for the preservation of the original speaker's words and therefore multiple analyses by future researchers, leaving the original researcher's methods up for critique. The authenticity and authority of the research on Indigenous people is usually granted by traditional Academia, not by the Indigenous community itself.

Part of the community-engaged methodology of oral histories is a greater responsibility "to empower speakers beyond the interview or observation approach, to ensure that the tribe is adequately and appropriately represented."⁸² This is a level of investment in the continued wellbeing of the communities and individual collaborators. In a sense, it is genuine community building. While "genealogical connection is important, it does not guarantee access," because the

⁸⁰ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 129.

⁸¹ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 130.

⁸² Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 135.

researcher in question might not have deeply held cultural values and thus do damage to the community.⁸³

Language Revitalization

In this section I will show the challenges that those who would renew or revitalize the Wendat languages face. Language revitalization is a major movement in Indigenous communities right now, as a way to connect with culture and ancestors, as well as to decolonize and heal from historical trauma and language loss. The concept of the historical loss of language is familiar to people even outside of the Indigenous community, due to American globalization. Ordinarily, language learning would be transmitted from one generation to the next by babies and children hearing it and interacting with it in the world around them. In a historical loss situation however, there might not be any living speakers left, so the next learners of the language must learn by reading books and listening to sometimes archaic recordings which would not reflect the normal evolution of the language had it been allowed to continue.

Linguists call new words that get made up as time goes on “neologisms.” One current problem facing language revitalization in the Wendat Confederacy is a lack of new vocabulary to describe the world as it is now, such as: university, a cup of coffee, or website. But one cannot simply make up a new word; one could, but getting other people to use it with you, being able to use it widely, is another thing entirely. There are some logistical challenges involved in making up new words, such as accuracy (does everyone agree?), usage (is it appropriate and community-approved for use?), likeability (even if its construction is accurate based on historic

⁸³ Nēpia Mahuika, *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition*, *ibid*, p. 136.

grammar, etc, does it fit into how people want to use the language now?) The very nature of language is that people will use what is comfortable to them in a conversational setting, rules and tradition be damned! So if a word is going to circulate widely and become part of the lexicon, people have to *want* to use it. We don't call womens' underwear "bifurcated ladies' garments" today because no one wants to use that term, and you can't force them to.

Language revival and language renewal are different classifications for bringing a language back into common usage, as far as the discipline of linguistics is concerned. Language revival occurs after a language has already fallen asleep. It involves bringing a language back into use that is no longer being used by any native (or L1) speakers.⁸⁴ Language renewal, on the other hand, occurs when the language is in the process of falling asleep. In other words, the language is endangered. Dale E. Otto defined language renewal as "an organized adult effort to ensure that at least some members of a group whose traditional language has a steady declining number of speakers will promote its being learned by others in the group."⁸⁵ It is still too early in my research to make a firm declaration for Wendat or Waⁿdat in terms of whether the movements are language *revivals* or language *renewals*, but the title of the next iteration of this paper could change to "Healing Through Language: *Renewal* in the Wendat Confederacy."

The term "revitalization" has multiple uses and definitions, and is not a universally-accepted term. However, I believe that it is currently the most widely understood and visible term for Indigenous community language projects. *The Routledge Handbook of Language*

⁸⁴ A L1 speaker is a term used by linguists to denote people for whom the language in question is their first language; in other more colloquial words, they are a "native speaker" of that language. A L2 speaker is someone who heard a L1 speaking the language while growing up.

⁸⁵ Dale E. Otto, "Language Renewal, Bilingualism, and the Young Child," *Language Renewal among American Indian Tribes: Issues, Problems, and Prospects*, InterAmerica Research Associates, Rosslyn, Va.; National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, Arlington, Va. (1982): 32.

Revitalization, edited by our very own professor emerita, Leanne Hinton, uses a broad definition of language revitalization, more in line with the way the term is used colloquially, whether by academics or the public. According to the *Handbook*, “Language revitalization (LR) is commonly understood as giving new life and vigor to a language that has been decreasingly in use (or has ceased to be used altogether).”⁸⁶ This term encompasses both revivals and renewals. The *Handbook* links language diversity to “knowledge systems, cultures, ecosystems, and human rights,” and states that language is often embedded in a “broader ethnic revival.”⁸⁷ This was certainly true for the Wendat, who saw a surge of interest in language revitalization in the midst of a cultural revival taking place in the 1990s, which will be discussed in the oral histories section.

The community itself must be in charge of its language revitalization movement for it to be successful. “Researchers from outside of the community often play a big role,” but it takes people on the ground in the community to help it flourish.⁸⁸ What this means is that while linguists and historians and other scholars have a role to play in these language movements, the impetus to continue running the day-to-day aspects of the project must reside within the community for it to truly take hold. For every Wendat and Waⁿdat linguist working within an institutional academic framework (such as John Steckley, Craig Kopriv, or Megan Lukaniec), you need folks who reside within the community to disseminate the research in a viable way that appeals to the general population.

⁸⁶ Hinton, Leanne, Leena Huss, Gerald Roche, eds. *The Routledge Handbook*, p. xxi.

⁸⁷ Hinton, Leanne, Leena Huss, Gerald Roche, eds. *The Routledge Handbook*, pp. xxi-xxii.

⁸⁸ Hinton, Leanne, Leena Huss, Gerald Roche, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*. New York: Routledge, 2018, p. xxiv.

In the Huronne-Wendat community in Wendake, Québec, some notable local community members who have done this work are Arakwa Sioui, Andrée Levesque Sioui, and Marcel Godbout, as well as Linda Sioui who will be introduced at greater length later. Each of them was involved in the Yawenda Project, a major language revitalization program that joined the Huronne-Wendat nation with Laval University and federal funding from 2007-2013. While they helped lay the groundwork for a functional continuing project on a large scale, they continue to work within the local community in very hands-on ways. Arakwa Sioui developed the language activity learning worksheets found on languewendat.com, Wendake's online dictionary project.⁸⁹ She interacts directly with the language community online by continuing to share her work via the Facebook page, Tsiweyih iyawendou'tenh, where she posts crosswords and news articles, among other language activities.⁹⁰ Andrée Levesque Sioui, in addition to being a very popular musician who produces songs in the Wendat language, also does interactive shows and lessons within the schools for children in Wendake.⁹¹ Marcel Godbout, whom I interviewed for this project, runs the language program within the education department in Wendake.⁹²

For all of the theoretical and academic work that is being done, there is a need for people in the community who are producing curriculum, programs, and activities, headed by people who have the teaching skills to disperse this knowledge in engaging ways. For the Wyandot(te) communities, Richard Zane Smith and Catherine Tamaro are inspiring figures who further the

⁸⁹ The online Wendat dictionary which was made during the Yawenda Project can be found here: <https://languewendat.com/lecons-et-exercices/>.

⁹⁰ Her language group Facebook page "Tsiweyih iyawendou'tenh" can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/arakwasouiConsultanteLinguistique/>.

⁹¹ Check out some of her work here: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/wendat-language-wendake-revitalization-1.5375926>.

⁹² Due to time constraints, Godbout's interview will not be appearing in this undergraduate version of the thesis project.

desire for language, both through encouraging the community to use it and by using it themselves when they lead ceremonies.⁹³ John Steckley visits frequently to participate in ceremonies and to teach language workshops and camps for kids, as well as writing a frequently updated language blog for the Wyandotte of Oklahoma.⁹⁴ Craig Kopriss has been an encouraging community connector, whether it's through translations by request or connecting community members and helping them with tools to learn the language.

Anton Treuer, an Ojibwe scholar, described his experience learning his language in *The Language Warrior's Manifesto*, where he lays out some of the challenges of language revitalization:

“Revitalizing a language that is not one of the world’s one hundred most commonly spoken and taught requires special effort. The deck is stacked against us. Such a phenomenal undertaking never happens by itself simply because it is deserved or right, or because people wish it would happen. It takes real, intentional effort. And such intentional effort also requires leadership. Leadership like that is not found, it is made. We have to provide the initiative ourselves—nobody can or will do it for us. We cannot wish our languages back to health. We cannot teach them if we don’t first learn them. We can’t lead in their revitalization from the sidelines.

Uncle Sam is never going to come walking out of the bush or over the Plains and hand you your language on a silver platter, saying, ‘Sorry about the last five hundred years.’

The world is not a fair place. Fairness is not given, it is made. So we have to engineer it

⁹³ Zane Smith and Tammaro were also interview collaborators for this project. Zane Smith will be introduced in the oral histories section, and Tammaro’s interview has not been included yet due to time constraints.

⁹⁴ That language blog can be found here: <https://www.wyandotte-nation.org/category/language/>.

ourselves...Language warriors see the importance of their language, center their lives around it, and lead the effort to bring it back.”⁹⁵

In short, learning one’s ancestral language is a long road fraught with many challenges: personal, societal, and governmental to name a few. Nevertheless, acquiring the language by any means and in any quantity is a success as well as a requirement for further progress in rehabilitating a language. In order to prioritize language learning in this settler-dominated climate, we may need to make some personal and professional sacrifices. Only then can historical narratives about Indigenous peoples be reevaluated for greater accuracy.

Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina: the Missing Link in Wendat Language Revitalization

Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina was a Huronne-Wendat language revitalizer who lived from 1909-1994.⁹⁶ It is often stated that the Wendat language fell asleep in the late nineteenth century, and did not begin to wake up until the cultural revival of the 1990s. Some sources believe that there was a Wendat speaker who walked on into the next life in 1920.⁹⁷ If this is true, then the last years of this speaker’s life may have overlapped with the first eleven years of Tehariolina’s childhood, giving her the opportunity to have heard the original language being spoken. This is significant evidence that supports the continuity of the Wendat language, not only in spirit but in linguistic technicality. At a point where people thought the language was asleep, Tehariolina’s steady interest in keeping it alive with whatever means necessary provides a historical grey area between “asleep” and “awake,” complicating the standard narrative.

⁹⁵ Anton Treuer, *The Language Warrior’s Manifesto*, *ibid*, p. 12.

⁹⁶ Thank you to the Wendake Archivist, Stéphane Picard, for these dates.

⁹⁷ People within the community said this to me, and this theory may be based on Abbé Prosper Vincent, who was interviewed by Marius Barbeau shortly before he walked on in 1915. People also believe there was a potential female speaker who was Wendat and walked on in 1920.

If the proposed 1920 date of the last living speaker is correct, and if Tehariolina had the chance to hear this speaker speak the language, influencing the way that she herself used the language, then Tehariolina would be classified as an L2 speaker. Linguists refer to native speakers, or those who learned the language in childhood, as “L1 speakers.” They refer to speakers who had the benefit of hearing L1 speakers speak the language as “L2 speakers.” With Tehariolina’s life overlapping both her own language revitalization program and Linda Sioui’s in the 1990s, if she was in fact a L2 speaker, then she provides a kind of missing link, bridging the gap between the falling asleep and waking up dates. In fact, it might show that the Wendat language never truly fell asleep. Linda Sioui said in her interview that the Wendat people never gave up on the language—Marguerite’s work and life provide evidence for this statement.⁹⁸

Throughout the twentieth century, Linda Sioui and many others in Wendake sought to meet with Tehariolina in order to obtain a name in the Wendat language because she was in possession of the Potier dictionary, which Linda Sioui described as a rare source at the time.⁹⁹ Tehariolina used the manuscript Huron dictionary from Jesuit missionary Pierre Potier circa 1750 to find names.¹⁰⁰ She took an active interest in keeping the language alive as much as possible, a large part of which included connecting people to their Wendat heritage through naming.

In 1984, Tehariolina published a book titled, *La Nation Huronne: Son Histoire, Sa Culture, Son Esprit* (The Huronne Nation: Its History, Culture, and Spirit).¹⁰¹ This book was a culmination of decades of research about the history of the Wendat, including migration patterns,

⁹⁸ Linda Sioui, oral history interview by author, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Linda Sioui, oral history interview by author, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Pierre (Père) Potier (S.J.), around 1750, (1708-1781), *Grammar of the Huron Language*, Manuscript.

¹⁰¹ It should be noted that her book was published before the cultural revivals of the 1990s where the endonym, Wendat, was reclaimed and officially added back into the nation’s name. Today it is referred to as the Huron-Wendat Nation by English speakers and La Nation Huronne-Wendat in Québécois French.

hunting territories, traditional art and dances, and a report on the languages.¹⁰² In addition to being known as the local language maven, the contents of this monograph demonstrate her life's work, which is why I found it important to examine in terms of its linguistic content.

In *La Nation Huronne*, Tehariolina set out to offer an authoritative account of the Wendat people and their history by recording a Wendat perspective, including the language. She breaks her book into four sections. The fourth section of her book includes the majority of her content about the Wendat language. Revealing the place language holds for her and the nation, she titles this section, "le portrait vivant de l'esprit et de l'âme de la Nation huronne" ("the living portrait of the spirit and soul of the Huron nation"). Within this section, Chapter XXVII is dedicated solely to the history and nature of "la langue huronne" (the Wendat language).¹⁰³ Chapter XXVIII presents primary sources in *la langue huronne* via Christian prayers which were translated into the Wendat language. These prayers were used for services at the historic Notre Dame de Lorette chapel which still stands today in the old part of Wendake. Chapter XXIX presents a diverse set of documents, at least six of which are dealing with language and orthography.¹⁰⁴

In Chapter XXVII, Marguerite begins her historiography of the language by citing a 1908 report of a Jesuit, Father Arthur Edward Jones, who stated that the falling asleep date for the Wendat language was sometime around 1888. Jones described the bleak challenges the language was facing at the time by stating, "The difficulties of the language are innumerable given that

¹⁰² Marguerite Vincent, *La Nation Huronne: Son Histoire, Sa Culture, Son Esprit*, (Québec: Éditions du Pélican, 1984). According to her Introduction Générale on page 21, it is the culmination of "Depuis plus de trente ans...que j'ai mené un ensemble de *recherches spécifiques à ma Nation*" (over thirty years of research specific to her nation).

¹⁰³ Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina, *La Nation Huronne*, *ibid*, p. 24. All translations are my own.

¹⁰⁴ The subsections within Chapter XXIX that I'm referring to here are numbers 2, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 12. Marguerite Vincent, "Chapitre XXIX: Notes et Documents Divers Relatifs aux Hurons," in *La Nation Huronne*, (Québec: Éditions du Pélican, 1984), pp. 453-466.

Huron became practically a dead language about twenty years ago, and without a living speaker how could I not add that these difficulties are almost insurmountable?”¹⁰⁵ While his assessment of the challenges that lay ahead was accurate, Tehariolina found flaws in Jones’ data. She points to the inaccuracy of his 1908 report in that he named Chief Bastien as the last Huron speaker, and he had only died a few years prior, not in 1888. She reveals that the Abbot Prosper Vincent was also still alive during this time period, and not only did he author a vernacular dictionary in the Huron language, but in 1911 he sat down with Marius Barbeau to provide recordings of multiple Huron songs. Significantly, Tehariolina is arguing here for the continuity of the Huron (Wendat) language through the year 1911, two years after her birth.¹⁰⁶

In the section, “Difficultés de la Langue Huronne, Témoignages Historiques,” Tehariolina demonstrated her vast research project on the language, by providing its chronological history. She reached back to the earliest documentation of the Wendat language, the expeditions of Jacques Cartier in the 1530s, which produced two lists of over one hundred words each. She states, with pride, “In fact, the ancient Huron, was, of all the native languages of North America, the first to be the object of a linguistically systematic study, even if at the time this one could only be partial and therefore provisional.”¹⁰⁷ The Wendat people whom Cartier met are sometimes referred to by anthropologists and historians as the St. Lawrence Iroquoians—an argument that they are different from the modern Wendat people. However, Wendat people know

¹⁰⁵ Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina, *La Nation Huronne*, *ibid*, p. 383. The original quote in French is: “Les difficultés de la langue sont innombrables étant donné que le huron devint pratiquement une langue morte il y a une vingtaine d’années, et sans maître vivant comment pourrais-je ne pas ajoute pas que ces difficultés sont presque insurmontables?”

¹⁰⁶ Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina, *La Nation Huronne*, *ibid*, p. 383.

¹⁰⁷ Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina, *La Nation Huronne*, *ibid*, p. 384. The original French is: “En fait, le huron ancien, fut, de toutes les langues autochtones d’Amérique du Nord, la première à être l’objet d’une étude linguistiquement systématique, même si à l’époque celle-ci ne pût être que partielle et donc provisoire.”

that the people who were living in the fifteenth-century villages of Stadacona (modern Québec City) and Hochelaga (modern Montréal) were in fact Wendat ancestors, and these areas form part of the ancestral lands. This is part of why the Wendake reserve in Loretteville—just outside of Québec City—is legally the Huron-Wendat nation’s land.¹⁰⁸

She provides some conjugations in the Wendat language, such as the example below:

IATACAN: Mon frère [my brother];
AITACAN: Mes frères [my brothers];
SATACAN: Ton frère [your (singular) brother];
TSATACAN: Tes frères [your (singular) brothers];
OTACAN: Son frère [his (or her) brother];
ATOTACAN: Ses frères [his (or her) brothers];¹⁰⁹

Note how in the French and English translations, when the pronoun changes, the only part of the word “brother” that shifts is the ending, adding an “s” if the subject is plural. However, in the Wendat version, there is a uniquely different prefix in front of the root for brother, *-tacan-* for each change in pronoun, but no change to the ending with this particular context.¹¹⁰ All of the needed information about the person is encoded in what is called the “pronominal prefix.”¹¹¹

Tehariolina quotes Jesuit Father Joseph François Lafitau from an early eighteenth-century source explaining the difficulties of learning an Indigenous North American language as a European. At this point in New France history, the Jesuits had been learning and using Indigenous North American languages for almost a century, and so had ample experience in creating their own inter-mission pedagogical techniques. Lafitau’s assessment for the European

¹⁰⁸ Jean-François Richard, “Territorial Precedence in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Huron-Wendat,” *Ontario Archaeology Journal: Multidisciplinary Investigations into Huron-Wendat and St. Lawrence Iroquoian Connections* no. 96, (2016): 26-34; John Steckley, “St. Lawrence Iroquoians among the Wendat: Linguistic Evidence,” *Ontario Archaeology Journal: Multidisciplinary Investigations into Huron-Wendat and St. Lawrence Iroquoian Connections* no. 96, (2016): 17-25.

¹⁰⁹ Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina, *La Nation Huronne*, *ibid*, p. 388.

¹¹⁰ John L. Steckley, *A Huron-English/English Huron Dictionary (Listing Both Words and Noun and Verb Roots)*, (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007).

¹¹¹ Pronominal prefixes are like pronouns but they are attached to the front of verbs.

student is that, “We can even say that he will never know it except very imperfectly”...unless the person receives ample and considerate help, then “he will overcome the difficulties” with the assistance of a community member “who [will] smooth the path for him.”¹¹²

Tehariolina’s Language Revitalization Program

In the mid-twentieth century, Tehariolina launched a language revitalization project with funds from the band council.¹¹³ The boxes of Tehariolina’s effects at the Wendake archives contain years of robust reports including a literature review of all of her background research into the language and its history, her project proposal, a timeline, and a budget breakdown.¹¹⁴

In looking through her boxes of personal correspondence in the Wendake archives, it is clear that Tehariolina had a passion for and deep commitment to the Wendat language throughout her whole life. People wrote fond letters to her that included anecdotes about how the Kanienkeha (Mohawk) and other Indigenous nations were writing in their language, and how Wendat people were eagerly learning about other Indigenous language projects.¹¹⁵ It is also clear that she was practicing performative cultural traditions decades before the well-known cultural revival of the 1990s. Her personal correspondences included dozens of requests on the business letterheads of various organizations who wanted her to come share traditional Wendat culture for

¹¹² This is my own translation and analysis of that quote. Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina, *La Nation Huronne*, *ibid*, p. 393. The original French is: “On peut dire même qu’il ne la saura jamais que très imparfaitement, s’il n’est pas secouru et s’il n’a le talent de suppléer au défaut des livres, en se faisant une méthode, qu’il applanisse [*sic*] les difficultés, et qui lui abrègent le chemin.”

¹¹³ Whether oral history collaborator Linda Sioui knew about Tehariolina’s language project, or patterned hers from it in any way, will be a question in a follow-up interview with Linda in the next iteration of this thesis.

¹¹⁴ Wendake Archives, Fonds Marguerite Vincent, “Projet Langue Huronne Marguerite Vincent” 8531-03.

¹¹⁵ Kanien’kehá:ka in the language’s orthography. Wendake Archives, Fonds Marguerite Vincent, “correspondences personnelles” 8541-04.

their events, most notably an appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* in 1965.¹¹⁶ According to the Wendake Archivist, Stéphane Picard, her monograph, *La Nation Huronne*, was the concise presentation of decades of her life's work.

She created robust language revitalization projects beginning in 1981 with funding from the Huronne-Wendat Nation Band Council. A document dated in December of 1981 names the project, “Redécouverte et Régénération de la Langue Huronne,” or “Rediscovery and Regeneration of the Huron Language.”¹¹⁷ In the documents from the 1984 iteration of the project, the two main parties listed are Tehariolina and Pierre H. Savignac, who also collaborated to help her write her monograph, *La Nation Huronne*. Savignac is listed as the Director of the Huronne Language Research Project, while Tehariolina's title is listed as the Co-responsible party.¹¹⁸ In the 1985 documents, Tehariolina and Savignac's salaries are recorded as ten (Canadian) dollars an hour. The expenses were dated by day and include: books, dictionaries, long-distance phone calls, supplies, photocopies, and miscellaneous costs.¹¹⁹

Phase I of the language project was enacted from January 1st, 1982 through December 31st, 1984.¹²⁰ In 1992, Linda Sioui's language project documents appeared in the archives, ten years after Tehariolina's project documents began, though her name is listed as “Lynda Sioui.”¹²¹

¹¹⁶ These engagements were usually under the name of her folklore group, “Troupe Cabir Coubat,” named after the major waterfall in Wendake. Wendake Archives, Fonds Marguerite Vincent, “Contrat d'Engagement/État de Compte” 8543-15, as well as “Correspondance/Engagement” 8543-14. These appearances included the following: Johnson & Johnson, Laal University, the town of Montmorency, the Council of Popular Arts in Québec, the town of Chandler's fiftieth anniversary celebration, the Alliance Française in Québec, someone who was making a thirty-minute black and white film entitled, “Legende Arawak,” the Ste Justine centenary celebration, the Regional Recreation Council of Québec, the Knights of Columbus, the village of Odanak, the Archaeology Society of Sherbrooke, and many more, as well as engagements within the Huron Village and in Montréal.

¹¹⁷ Wendake Archives, Fonds Marguerite Vincent, “Projet Langue Huronne Marguerite Vincent” 8531-03.

¹¹⁸ Wendake Archives, Fonds Marguerite Vincent, “Projet Langue Huronne Marguerite Vincent” 8531-03.

¹¹⁹ Wendake Archives, Fonds Marguerite Vincent, “Projet Langue Huronne Marguerite Vincent” 8531-03.

¹²⁰ Wendake Archives, Fonds Marguerite Vincent, “Projet Langue Huronne Marguerite Vincent” 8531-03.

¹²¹ This is an alternate spelling of Linda's name, the source of which I haven't tracked down yet. Wendake Archives, Fonds Marguerite Vincent, “Projet Langue Huronne Marguerite Vincent” 8531-03.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Wyandotte, Oklahoma: Richard Zane Smith¹²²

Richard Zane Smith was born in 1955 and is a Wyandot man who grew up in Missouri, though his mom was from Kansas. As signified in his middle name, he is part of the Wyandot(te) family of Zanes. The Zane family traces their lineage to Tarhe, a Wyandot famous in history for having led the resistance against American expansion in the Ohio area in the late eighteenth century during the so-called Northwest Indian Wars.¹²³ The name Zane came into the lineage during the next generation when Tarhe's daughter Myeerah married Isaac Zane.¹²⁴

Tarhe was born in Detroit and lived in the Ohio area before the Wyandot were relocated by the U.S. government, moving first to Kansas and some later moved to Oklahoma.¹²⁵ Tarhe's last military battle was at Fallen Timbers, where he lost the use of one of his arms. There is also a U.S. military helicopter named for Tarhe—ironic, given that Tarhe fought against American expansionism, and now his namesake helicopter serves America's imperialist military agenda.

Growing up, Richard always had a desire to learn the language of his ancestors, a language which, up until the end of the twentieth century, was called Huron, and now is known as Wyandot or Waⁿdat. Richard has conducted his own research on Wyandot(te) history and language as well as collaborated with a settler linguist named Dr. Craig Kopriv. Kopriv prefers to

¹²² Richard Zane Smith, oral history interview by author, Wyandotte, Oklahoma, June 19, 2019.

¹²³ Shout out to the *Ohio History Central* webpage for listing The Crane as his "Anglo-American exonym." See: <https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Tarhe>.

¹²⁴ Isaac Zane is who Zanesville, Ohio is named for. See this blog post on the Wyandotte Nation's website: <https://www.wyandotte-nation.org/culture/history/biographies/tarhe-grand-sachem/>.

¹²⁵ If you're familiar with Tecumseh, their careers ran almost parallel to one another, though they didn't always agree.

use Marius Barbeau’s spelling for the name of the language, Waⁿdat, the pronunciation of which is somewhat similar to how people on the U.S. side of the border pronounce “Wyandot(te).”¹²⁶ For Richard, language is an intrinsic part of his identity; he said, “if I claim to be Wyandot, I need to at least have some understanding of the language of my ancestors.”¹²⁷ He feels a responsibility to “be able to think in the ways of our ancestors. And to do so means to really understand the language, understand how it’s put together, how thoughts were put together, how things were expressed, how stories were told...” which shows the important role that language plays in understanding the past, in processing an accurate history of the Wyandot(te) people.

Although he grew up in Missouri, Richard currently lives near the original Wyandotte reservation in Oklahoma.¹²⁸ Earlier in his life, he searched but could not find sources on the Waⁿdat language and so was unable to learn it. This amplified his historical trauma—that language which is tied to his Wyandot identity, despite an immense desire and motivation to learn, was denied to him. Therefore, he didn’t feel able to fully connect with his ancestral identity because of the historical loss of the language. Richard says that while his mother didn’t know the language, she may have heard some of it growing up because her cousins were calling her mother “Aunt Nae,” which is the second half of the Waⁿdat word for a maternal auntie.¹²⁹ According to Richard, “anę’ę is the Wyandot word for *my mom* and also for *my mom’s sister*. My mom’s nieces called her what they thought was ‘aunt nae’ but it was the proper Waⁿdat for *auntie*.”¹³⁰

¹²⁶ This information comes from multiple personal conversations I’ve had with Dr. Kopriv.

¹²⁷ Richard Zane Smith, oral history interview by author.

¹²⁸ Richard’s comment here is that “we actually live on what was once Seneca/Cayuga allotment lands.”

¹²⁹ Richard Zane Smith, oral history interview by author, p. 2.

¹³⁰ This clarification was given by Richard upon reviewing this section in May 2020.

Richard worked as a firefighter in Northern Saskatchewan for a little while, among Cree people there.¹³¹ This cultural immersion experience among people who had grown up with their language inspired Richard to seek out his own ancestral language. Richard decided if he couldn't learn his own language yet then he would learn other Native North American languages.

Later, he moved to the Diné (Navajo) reservation and began learning their language, developing language acquisition skills which would aid him later on with his own language.¹³² He expressed an identification with the wider language revitalization movement that has been happening in Indigenous communities when he said, “those of us who are involved in revitalization efforts, we kind of feel like it's part of the reawakening from a people who've become assimilated, and we have to admit first of all that we've been assimilated, and that's sometimes hard for people to actually admit...to even go there...”¹³³

It was while working on the Diné (Navajo) reservation that Richard began to look for any sources or information on the Waꞑdat language. His first impetus was to call the Wyandotte Nation in Oklahoma, under the assumption that after the removal from Kansas, most of the documents were probably transferred to Oklahoma.¹³⁴ Sarah Owens, the Wyandotte Nation's secretary at the time, sent Richard some research materials. He began with the scarce information he could get a hold of, memorizing lists of words Owens sent over. It's unknown how accurate those word lists were, given the source was settlers who had traded with the Wyandot(te) and

¹³¹ In Canada, Cree is one of the most widely spoken Aboriginal languages. Like the Cherokee, the Cree have their own alphabet.

¹³² I am using the word Navajo here because that's what Richard used in his interview, and it was probably the most commonly used term during the period of time he was living there. The people known as Navajo (exonym) call themselves Diné (endonym), and their reservation is currently located between the states of Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico in the American Southwest. Though it should be noted that many still identify themselves using the exonym.

¹³³ Richard Zane Smith, oral history interview by author.

¹³⁴ And probably also because the Oklahoma Wyandotte Nation has federal recognition, and therefore resources, that the Kansas Wyandot Nation does not.

needed just a few phrases to navigate their interactions with the Wyandot(te) people. Another main motivation for language acquisition, he cites, was that he started participating in sweat lodge ceremonies, saying, “I wanted to use as much language as I possibly could when I was in the sweat lodge. And so, if I didn’t know Waⁿdat I would just be silent; I really didn't want to use a lot of English in the sweat lodge.”¹³⁵

Richard happened to meet historian Charles Aubrey Buser who lived in Maryland and had been interested in the Wyandot(te) since childhood. He visited with the Wyandotte of Oklahoma Nation and was respected by the community.¹³⁶ Buser was able to travel to archives and to research at the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, where he encountered all of Marius Barbeau’s ethnographic works from 1911-1912. Throughout his career, Buser passed along all of his research to Wyandot(te) people, and while Richard was still living on the Navajo reservation with his wife and young children, Buser sent him some of the Barbeau recordings. Richard began playing the recordings every day and had an immediately profound and visceral experience which he described by saying, “it was like touching my ancestors for the first time when I could hear their voices singing some of these ancient songs, because some of them had been born in Ohio, and I’m hearing their voices,” with Ohio being a reference to where the ancestors lived before the harrowing removals in the nineteenth century.¹³⁷ The significance of this feeling cannot be understated; these elders whom Barbeau was interviewing in Kansas and Oklahoma in the early twentieth century had lived through that removal experience, and for those in Oklahoma, they had lived through two removals.

¹³⁵ Richard Zane Smith, oral history interview by author, p. 3.

¹³⁶ Charles Aubrey Buser, 1922-2010. See: <https://www.wyandotte-nation.org/community/tribal-profiles/special-friends/charles-aubrey-buser/>.

¹³⁷ Richard Zane Smith, oral history interview by author, p. 3.

Each Fall, Wyandot(te) and Wendat people from all over come together to celebrate the Green Corn Ceremony on his property. This event provides an annual opportunity for members throughout the confederacy to gather for traditional ceremony. At the ceremony grounds, Richard gives a forty-five minute long Thanksgiving address in the Wa^adat language. Last summer when I was in Oklahoma working with him, he took me to the ceremony grounds and recited this version for me. This has been my biggest language-immersion opportunity to date, and it was the turning point in my journey of language acquisition. After this experience, I could truly hear and understand more of the language, recognizing its components. I carry it with me always.

Wendake, Québec: Linda Sioui

In her oral history interview Linda Sioui stated, “I have pretty well dedicated part of my life to our language and our history.”¹³⁸ Linda lives on the Wendake reserve just outside of Québec City, and is an enrolled member of the Huronne-Wendat nation. She was born in 1960 in Montréal, but her father moved them home to Wendake in 1969 because he wanted to be near community again. Linda was the main driving force behind the Wendat language revitalization movement of the 1990s, inspired by her predecessor, Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina, a respected elder. The 1990s movement then grew into the ongoing movement of today.

Linda obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Ottawa and a Master’s Degree in Anthropology from Laval University where she wrote her thesis on the reaffirmation of Wendat identity.¹³⁹ As a Sioui, she is a member of one of the most prominent

¹³⁸ Linda Sioui, oral history interview by author, Wendake, Québec, July 14, 2019, transcript, p. 1.

¹³⁹ Linda Sioui, “La Réaffirmation de l’Identité Wendate / Wyandotte à l’heure de la Mondialisation,” Master’s thesis, Université Laval, 2011. The English version “The Reaffirmation of Wendat/Wyandotte identity at a time of Globalization” is yet to be published.

Wendake families which includes historian Georges Sioui and Konrad Sioui, who is currently the Grand Chief of the Huronne-Wendat nation and was previously the Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Québec and Labrador.¹⁴⁰

The 1990s language revitalization project which she coordinated was part of a larger Wendat cultural identity revival that led to not only waking up the languages, but also a full rediscovery and reclamation of a Wendat narrative of history and culture. This revival resulted in meetings being held in the longhouse again, and a renewed pride in traditions.¹⁴¹ It was during this era, for example, that the endonym, “Wendat” was officially made part of the name of the nation, and in overall literature, “Wendat” began to be used in place of the old exonym, “Huron(ne).”¹⁴² The 1999 reburial of the ancestors, a nod to the traditional Feast of the Dead—only this time the ancestors were being repatriated from a museum—was a result of this movement.¹⁴³ It culminated in a ceremony honoring the four modern components of the Wendat Confederacy, joined in political unity across the continent.

Linda’s interest in revitalizing the Wendat language sprang out of her passion for Wendat identity and connection to culture, as well as her own life experiences with identity erasure. When she was growing up, she remembers other Natives coming to Québec for schools or events; Linda found herself feeling bad about not being able to speak her language. In our interview she said,

¹⁴⁰ Both of whom are Linda’s cousins. For more on the prominence of the Sioui family, see: Georges Sioui, *Eatenonha: Native Roots of Modern Democracy*, (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019).

¹⁴¹ A longhouse is a traditional form of housing for the Wendat. The two traditional longhouses that are available for public tours in Wendake today are three-fire houses. There would have been two families per fire, so that means six families would have shared these particular longhouses where traditional ceremonies are now held.

¹⁴² Huron is generally used in English language publications, while Huronne is the French language spelling.

¹⁴³ For more on the Wendat Feast of the Dead and the 1999 reunion of the four modern nations, see: Kathryn Magee Labelle, “Epilogue: Reconnecting the Modern Diaspora, 1999,” in *Dispersed But Not Destroyed*; also Erik R. Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

“I always felt growing up...they [other Natives] used to make fun of us because we didn’t speak our language. And I said, there is so much in a language. I was worried at a very early stage about our identity. I felt...when I was a teenager that I as a Huronne-Wendat had an identity complex in [the] face of the other Natives who came here. And they surely said, ‘Well you guys are not Native; you don’t speak your language.’ It was a big thing back then.”¹⁴⁴

Her experience of cultural erasure stemmed from other Indigenous people not fully accepting the Huron-Wendat cultural identity as Native, based on language loss. Other Natives didn’t think the Huron-Wendat were “Native enough,” which is a common component of historical trauma among Indigenous people in North America.

When Linda was growing up, the Wendat language wasn’t posted on all of the street signs in Wendake as it is today. She only heard the language in the form of personal names or at Christmas time in the chapel when they sang the “Huron Carol.”¹⁴⁵ Today in Wendake, each street has a name in Wendat on the top which is then translated into French on the bottom. Even the stop signs say “stop” in Wendat.

The role Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina played in twentieth-century Wendat language revitalization prior to the 1990s became apparent in Linda’s interview. When Linda was growing up, a runner up for the title of Huron Princess needed to have a name in the language. So she went to Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina to receive her Wendat name. As stated previously,

¹⁴⁴ Linda Sioui, oral history interview, transcript p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ The original “Huron Carol” was written by Jesuit Father Jean de Brébeuf in the early seventeenth century. While Brébeuf had been living among the Huron (Wendat) and learning the language, he still mixed up some of their culture with the culture of their neighbors, the Algonkian-speaking Innu. For example, he calls the Creator “Manitou,” which is not the Wendat word.

Tehariolina was a respected Elder in the community and named many Wendat people in the twentieth century. Of her experience with Tehariolina, Linda said:

“Ms. Marguerite Vincent had the [Father Pierre] Potier dictionary and it was WOW; it was a treasure. If you put your hand on a Huron dictionary or a grammar, it was like you found GOLD. It was rare because they’re rare books. It was not taught [at] school...it was the nuns who were running the schools, and they certainly didn’t make us feel proud to be Natives; it was quite the contrary.”¹⁴⁶

Here Linda highlighted another source of historical trauma: being re-triggered by the nuns who were in charge of teaching Wendat children; the nuns contributed much to make them feel ashamed of their Native identity. There was pressure at school for her to be less Native, while at the same time she felt social pressure from other Indigenous people to be more Native.

The community’s revitalization project, which Linda was hired to coordinate, began in 1991 by repatriating all archival documents and establishing a language committee; this first year culminated with an ethnolinguistic workshop with Dr. John Steckley.¹⁴⁷ The earliest document in the Wendake archives about the 1990s language project is a report submitted in 1994 for the activities in the previous year, 1993.¹⁴⁸ Page 2 of Linda’s report states that the Huronne-Wendat Nation’s council had already been putting financial resources toward the cause of gathering relative historical documents about the Wendat language, as a first step. It stated that a committee of volunteers had been established and already working for a year to organize source documents and had reached out to other Indigenous nations to see how they set up their organizational

¹⁴⁶ Linda Sioui, oral history interview by author, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Thanks to Linda Sioui for this added clarification in June 2020.

¹⁴⁸ Wendake Archives, Linguistic Orientation Committee documents, file 0559; Wendake Archives, language committee formation folder, Education B1222 “CAGL Projet développement langue huron.”

systems around language sources. This committee was called the “linguistic orientation committee.”¹⁴⁹

The report from 1994 stated that the language project was under the Education sector of the Council of the Huron-Wendat Nation and financed from their budget. At the time, that financial contribution had amounted to \$10,000.¹⁵⁰ In a letter to the “nation’s manager” at the time, the Education Director, Roger Vincent, asked for \$107,000 for the language project to continue the next year.¹⁵¹ Approximately a quarter of this sum was granted.¹⁵² Today, the “Culture, Heritage and Language Sector” housed within CDFM (*Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d’œuvre* or the Training and Workforce Development Center), handles a broad umbrella of educational programs.¹⁵³

The Yawenda Project, 2007-2013¹⁵⁴

Project Yawenda was a collaborative language revitalization project for the Wendat language which took place in Québec from 2007-2013. The idea for the project was generated by the Huronne-Wendat, with the preliminary groundwork laid by the language revitalization program of the 1990s (led by Linda Sioui) and initial funding and infrastructure offered by the band council office. Governmental funds were added to this, and the Huronne-Wendat Nation

¹⁴⁹ Wendake Archives, Linguistic Orientation Committee documents, file 0559, page 2. The formation of the linguistic orientation committee is also covered in Louis-Jacques Dorais’ report, *Yawenda: The Huron-Wendat Revive Their Language* (2014), p. 56.

¹⁵⁰ Wendake Archives, Linguistic Orientation Committee documents, file 0559, p. 6. That amount was probably for the year 1993.

¹⁵¹ Wendake Archives, Linguistic Orientation Committee documents, file 0559, pp. 7-8.

¹⁵² This clarification was added by Linda Sioui in June 2020.

¹⁵³ This sector is currently headed by Marcel Godbout, another community member with whom I conducted an oral history interview. Due to time constraints, his interview does not appear in this iteration of the project.

¹⁵⁴ Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Yawenda: The Huron-Wendat Revive Their Language* research document 11, (Centre interuniversitaire d’études et de recherches autochtones: Université Laval, Québec), 2014.

brought in Laval University as a partner to collaborate on executing the research, publications, and other activities over this five year period. In the case of the Yawenda Project, federal Canadian funds were being disbursed to support a project that began with individuals in the Wendat community who had already been doing this on their own for many decades. While this most recent project continues to have the most visibility, it was built on the work of Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina, Linda Sioui, and Richard Zane Smith, as well as other individual community members; it would not have been successful without them.

Yawenda produced several publications associated with their research process, as well as a core series of publications documenting the process of the project itself. Research document 11, *Yawenda: The Huron-Wendat Revive Their Language*, written by Laval University professor emeritus Louis-Jacques Dorais, contains the essential narrative of the project itself in terms of motivations, background, and outcomes. Over the course of the five-year project, there were at least twelve articles published describing the project itself, as well as many lectures and interviews given on the topic. Yawenda itself organized at least thirty-five lectures, seminars, workshops, and conferences, and members of the research team also participated in at least thirty-three externally organized conferences, seminars, and workshops. Project Yawenda generated at least thirty-six original publications on both the Wendat and Waⁿdat languages.¹⁵⁵

Sixty-two people are listed as participants in Project Yawenda, a list which includes Linda Sioui and Marcel Godbout (who were oral history collaborators for this thesis), as well as linguists John Steckley, Craig Kopriss, and Megan Lukaniec. The project had eight different directors over the five years, with titles such as: community representative, academic

¹⁵⁵ Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Yawenda, ibid*, Appendix A, pp. 77-87.

representative, and coordinator.¹⁵⁶ There was a governing council for the project, as well as Wendat language teachers who developed new pedagogy for teaching Wendat to various age groups.

Dorais narrows in on two primary contributions to the beginning stages of language loss for the Wendats of Québec: intermarriage, and the cessation of traditional hunting activities. As Wendat families became more blended, more people were introduced to the community who weren't Wendat speakers. Wendat society is matrilineal, meaning Wendat ethnic status via the clans system is passed down through the maternal line. A child with a Wendat mother and non-Aboriginal father would retain their mother's Wendat status and clan. A child with a Wendat father and a non-Aboriginal mother, however, might get left out of some of the traditional rights associated with identity, even if they still lived within the community. It is Dorais' argument that the child in the latter situation was less likely to transmit the Wendat language.

The other main reason for the beginning of significant language loss was that as early as the 1820s, there was a reduction in traditional hunting activities, coupled with a transition in the language used at school. Traditional hunting, which did not intersect with the settler society, would have been an environment of Wendat language immersion, especially for young boys. For the first two centuries or more of contact with the French, schooling was mostly taught in Wendat and church services even catered to Wendat. But by the 1820s, both school and church were increasingly conducted in French.¹⁵⁷

The linguistic orientation committee that was founded in 1992 and supported by the band council was initially headed by Linda Sioui, culminating in her reports which appear in the

¹⁵⁶ Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Yawenda, ibid*, Appendix B, pp. 88-90.

¹⁵⁷ Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Yawenda, ibid*, p. 53.

archives.¹⁵⁸ That group had invited John Steckley to host a language workshop for them and the committee sprang from that workshop. That committee later transformed into the Committee on the Huron-Wendat Language in the early 2000s. It was this committee that began to standardize the orthography and pronunciation of the language.¹⁵⁹

Due to “the presence of economic and territorial issues that appeared more urgent,” the previous two revitalization projects by Tehariolina and Sioui had been short-term initiatives with end dates and with limited financing. After the turn of the twenty-first century however, there was a renewed urgency felt for cultural revival and a reconnection with identity via the language. Dorais sees this as the result of more access to formal education coupled with the cultural revivals beginning in the 1960s and a higher standard of life, all coming to a head in the early 2000s. With this new capacity for infrastructure and desire for something beyond basic needs, there was now a call for a stable, permanent language program in Wendake.

In 2005, Yves Sioui and Isabelle Picard from Wendake began a cursory search for funding suitable for a substantial and longer language project, with the end goal being an established infrastructure in the community to teach the language to both adults and children. The name of the project, Yawenda, means “the Voice,” and is a reference to a petition in 1998 where community members called for Wendat to be taught in the school.¹⁶⁰ The goals were manageable and realistic: bring Wendat back into use in the community as a way to reconnect

¹⁵⁸ Dorais places the earliest seeds of the Yawenda project in the cultural revival of the 1960s, which culminated in Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina’s language revitalization project of the 1980s, and influenced the project led by Linda Sioui in the 1990s.

¹⁵⁹ It should be noted that this applies to the timeline for the Wendat language. Wa^adat standardization is not the subject here. Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Yawenda, ibid*, p. 56.

¹⁶⁰ Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Yawenda, ibid*, pp. 57-58.

with cultural identity and “think like their ancestors did”; there were no illusions that Wendat will replace the use of the Québécois language in Wendake any time soon.¹⁶¹

The best funding fit for the Yawenda project was the Community-University Research Alliances (CURA), which is a federally funded program “aimed at twinning community organizations with university researchers in order to answer specific community needs.” The five-year duration of Project Yawenda as well as the million dollar funding were based on the maximum allowed time and amount available through this grant. Laval University, being located in Québec City, was the natural choice of partner for the Huronne-Wendat Nation. At the time, Louis-Jacques Dorais was an anthropology professor at Laval and was slow to consider joining the project. However, after having enjoyed getting to know some Wendat students who appeared in his classes and considering their relationship as neighbors, he signed on.

While community members in Wendake had been holding onto culture and whatever they could of the language since the early twentieth century, as is evident from Tehariolina’s personal effects, Yawenda in the early 2000s has been the most visible project in their language revitalization movement. This is because it joined large federal funds with the legitimacy of westernized scholarship, in the form of a partnership with Laval University. One of the most significant and accessible productions of Yawenda was the online dictionary, which can be found at languewendat.com. Another main achievement of this project was the establishment of a larger infrastructure on the reserve to manage the language revitalization project, which Marcel Godbout, a Yawenda participant, manages. Part of this initiative was their investment in the education of Megan Lukaniec, who finished her PhD in Linguistics at the University of

¹⁶¹ Louis-Jacques Dorais, *Yawenda, ibid*, pp. 58-59.

California Santa Barbara in 2018 and is now the official tribal linguist. However, what should not be forgotten is that Yawenda couldn't have been successful or even come into existence without the work of individual community members, in particular Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina, Linda Sioui, and Richard Zane Smith.¹⁶²

Conclusion

Unəh awe:tiʔ tsatrihu:tat

Now listen up everyone!

Nəh skat aʔwatəʔ ɔmaʔndiyóraʔ

Now it happens we are of one mind.

Qmakyehtiʔ

We have gathered together.

Aʔtekwatəʔmesonyə ɔmaʔduʔməh ʔdaqmətsaʔ

We give many thanks for our Mother the earth.

Tižameh.

*Thank you.*¹⁶³

Language is an important part of sovereign identity, both for Indigenous individuals and nations. Reclaiming a language is an act of reclaiming identity, ancestors, and a historical past. Language is part of a cultural and historical heritage grounded in communication. Interwoven in language is a code for understanding relationships between people, animals, and their environment. Words and grammar tell the story of what is important and focal to a people; perspective can be glimpsed through syntax and the spaces between words.

The focus of this research has been the use of original languages in the Wendat Confederacy throughout time, with a specific emphasis on the multiple language revitalization (or renewal) movements. The key figures have been individual community members who began

¹⁶² Even though the Yawenda project was mostly addressing the Wendat language, the report and supporting publications did also include an overview of the efforts to revitalize Waʔdat.

¹⁶³ These lines are Waʔdat and are excerpted from the abbreviated Thanksgiving address, the Yanəʔəhkwanyəhkw, by Richard Zane Smith, and were translated from the Waʔdat by Dr. Craig Koprís. Richard Zane Smith, Dr. Craig Koprís, transl., *Daughters, Sisters, Mothers and Wives: A Waʔdat (Wyandot) Language Workbook*, (Ontario: Turtle's Back Publishing, 2019), p. 4.

with their own grassroots efforts, some of whose efforts received later support from band and tribal council resources, with federally-funded programs playing a role much later in the development of these projects. Therefore, the legacy of survival of each of these language movements has been due to a small group of individuals who have been able to keep hope alive across generations. These individuals share a passionate goal to see the languages flourish in such a way that they would be a viable option of communication, alongside English or French.

Language loss in an Indigenous community is a form of historical trauma. Over the course of my research for this project, I found that there is still much historical trauma in the community, resulting around feelings of guilt when it comes to language loss. The catch-22 of language learning in a situation of loss is that some community members feel guilty about having “lost” the language, even if loss occurred before their time. This guilt exacerbates historical trauma and creates a mental block around language learning; however, learning the language can be an instrumental tool for healing the historical trauma created by language loss and other factors.

Finding the Wendat perspective of this historical narrative is paramount to aid in healing from historical trauma and repairing the relationship between researchers, research institutions, and Indigenous communities. Going forward, Indigenous history needs to be more widely recognized as a subfield of the historical discipline, on equal footing with all other subdisciplines. This subfield probably will not look like other subfields in terms of methodology, yet I believe we can find an acceptable way forward nonetheless within the hallowed halls of academia. Letting a community define its own historical narrative may not be the best

methodology for every subfield of history, but for Indigenous history it is essential, for reasons of accuracy, reparations to trauma, human rights, and sovereignty.

This project was built from multiple research questions, one data based, and some based in process. The data-based research question was: What is the story and timeline of language revitalization within the Wendat Confederacy? My biggest data-based finding in terms of the historical timeline is that the efforts of Huronne-Wendat community member Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina may bridge the gap between what was previously considered the cutoff date of language loss and the revival in the 1990s, led by Linda Sioui. Tehariolina's personal communication records and her revitalization project supported by the Wendake band council show a robust and passionate effort to carry the Wendat language from one generation to the next, across the span of the twentieth century, and may result in a new classification of a "sleepy" language rather than fully sleeping. This may open another conversation on terminology in the future, whether the movement focused on Wendat language learning should be classified as language *renewal* rather than language *revitalization*.

My process-based question was: How might I employ a research methodology that undoes some of the damage inflicted by prior histories and better adapts to indigenous communities and their ways of keeping knowledge? I found there were benefits and challenges to this methodology. The benefits included: greater historical accuracy, more visibility for a Wendat worldview, a possible bridge to heal from historical trauma, and building a symbiotic relationship between researchers and the community. Allowing community voices to lead the discussion—via the collection of oral histories and community-engaged research practices—allows for a more accurate and responsible historical narrative. Utilization and

understanding of the primary languages that this group would have been speaking for most of history allows a Wendat worldview to emerge into primary focus when these histories engage the public. Community-engaged research can begin to heal the fragmented relationship between research institutions and Indigenous groups which has been a major contributor to historical trauma in this community. When language research is conducted in a community-engaged way, it can support language revitalization efforts, which in turn can support future researchers in a more symbiotic relationship.

Some of the challenges I have encountered with this methodology include: language acquisition, historical trauma, geography, and institutional expectations. Language acquisition takes a long time, especially with languages that don't have a widely-used pedagogy yet, particularly when one is learning languages that no one is currently fluent in. The Wendat and Wa'dat languages cannot be learned conversationally at the moment, which is a typical method to increase fluency. I found that historical trauma was a barrier not only to myself but for my community partners as well. Researchers of the past utilized methodologies which served themselves and their research institutions far more than it benefited the community upon whose identity their research was built. While there have been improvements in this realm in recent decades, these efforts have not yet supplanted the long history of abuse in this relationship which is firmly implanted in the memories of community members. Geography has presented a challenge for my own research as well as the efforts of Wendat language revitalizers, creating logistical difficulties and complicating the learning process. Community-engaged research is slower than traditional research and has led me to question my own motives at least once every week. As a descendant who is not enrolled in her nation, I don't have access to as much

information, as quickly, which is as it should be. I have to earn trust through conscientious, patient, genuine relationship building every step of the way.

Finally, there are institutional expectations: the research institution has pushed me in ways that increase historical trauma. One example of this occurred during my application process for a prestigious fellowship, when I was asked to submit a signed official letter from one of my elders stating that she had already agreed to be interviewed. While this step makes perfect sense given a westernized worldview—and we all want the best chance possible of succeeding at this research institution—it pushed too much too fast in terms of community time. I have been asked several times over the past two years to “simplify” my project for time and wider understandability, only to arrive in the communities and get chewed out by my elders and the band council office when they were deciding whether or not to approve my research. My gut told me when I cut those things out—again due to written space or time limitations—that it was wrong, but I didn’t know how else to fulfil everything that was being asked of me by the institution while still having the best competitive chance of getting my project funded. Some examples for this would be: cutting the explanation of the two different languages, not explaining the sovereign components of the confederacy and instead treating it as one homogenous group.

In conclusion, community-engaged research is by far a slower route than the design of traditional scholarly research, but it has the ability to heal the relationship between research entities and Indigenous communities. Thus, it should be utilized in order to not contribute more to historical trauma. Overall, I have found that the traditional scholarly disciplines are not inherently set up to support this kind of work, so I have had to break and remake the mold step

by step as I go along. In terms of my methodology on language learning as a more accurate and ethical historical practice, I realize that this methodology will have to grow in tandem with the language revitalization project itself. Which means lots of extra patience, but it is work that my heart is willing and eager to do.

For my own experience of beginning to learn the languages, I am ironically almost speechless. Getting to hear it for the first time was magical and like an out-of-body experience. I felt like I was hearing my ancestors, ancestors who have been erased from the historical record and about whom I know precious little, not for lack of extensive digging for that information. Of all my ancestors, these are the ones I look the most like, and that fact built my identity from the time that I was a child. Hearing the language was extraordinary; learning to speak it was surreal. When I was able to make the first Wendat words come out of my mouth (well maybe not the *first* ones, which I cringed at), I felt like someone was giving something back to me, something I never in a million years expected to receive. Through this precious gift I have felt a reclamation of my own lived identity, one that I was asked as a child to bury and never speak of, and remained silent about for so long out of fear. Those words from my childhood cannot be unheard, but likewise the Wendat and Waⁿdat words I speak now cannot be unsaid. In the process, I found that my identity was never buried, merely asleep, and it has just now begun to wake up.

Kwe, n'dio. Fallon yiatsih, Wendat n'di. Onywawenda' yeienhwi's. *Hello. My name is Fallon, I am Wendat. I am learning our language.*¹⁶⁴

Unęh a'yatenyęⁿdihšę? [*Now I have finished...*]

¹⁶⁴ These words are in the Wendat language.

ⁿdaeʔ haʔraʔ ! [*That's all!*]¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ These words are in the Waʔdat language. From: Richard Zane Smith, *Daughters, Sisters, Mothers and Wives*, *ibid*, p. 5.

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