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# Sahuhlúkhané' Ukwéhuwenéha They Learned to Speak it Again: An Investigation into the Regeneration of the Oneida Language

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Graduate Program in Education

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## Abstract

This study investigated the significance of the Oneida language to two groups of Oneida speakers and learners in the OnΛyota'á:ka' Oneida Nation of the Thames community.

This study included three research questions: (a) what is the significance of Oneida language to Oneida adult language learners who are seeking to acquire the language and what are they doing to regenerate the language; (b) what is the significance of Oneida language to Oneida adults who are conversationally fluent in Oneida language and what are they doing to regenerate the language; and (c) what does an investigation into my personal relationship with Oneida language reveal? The participants' responses resulted in the following five themes: (a) intergenerational language use, (b) cultural meaning and ties to identity, (c) Oneida youth, (d) language community, and (e) language regeneration/ revitalization practices. The findings of this research highlight the importance of Oneida language to learners, speakers, and the entire Oneida community.

## Keywords

Indigenous languages, First Nations languages, language regeneration, language revitalization, OnΛyota'á:ka', Oneida, Oneida language, Ukwehuwé, Haudenosaunee, Indigenous identity.

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I want to dedicate this work to Myra ne: yutatyáts aksótha ka. Kunolúkhwa' khale ya'tewahnislaké Awaketha:láke' ne: Ukwehuwenéha.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Acknowledgments..... ii

Table of Contents ..... iii

Chapter 1 I:kélhe' a:katwΛnu:táhkwe' Ukwehuwenéha (I Want to Speak Oneida) ..... 1

1 Locating Self ..... 1

    1.1 Overview..... 1

    1.2 Rationale for the Study ..... 5

    1.3 Purpose of the Study ..... 7

    1.4 OnΛyota'á:ka'/ Oneida context..... 8

    1.5 Indigenous Languages and the Ongoing Impact of Colonialism..... 10

    1.6 Federal and Provincial Scenarios..... 13

    1.7 Thesis Overview ..... 16

    1.8 Terminology..... 17

Chapter 2 Reviewing Indigneous Language and Identity..... 19

2 Overview..... 19

    2.1 Indigneous Langaue and Identity Formation ..... 19

    2.2 Culture and Group Identity ..... 21

    2.3 Overall Wellbeing: Healthy Mind and Body ..... 23

    2.4 Conclusion ..... 25

Chapter 3 Conceptual Framework and Methodology ..... 26

3 Overview..... 26

    3.1 Research Design..... 26

    3.2 Tribal-Centred Conceptual Framework ..... 29

    3.3 Indigenous Research Methodologies ..... 30

3.4	Toward a Onlayota'á:ka'-Centered Conceptual Framework.....	32
3.5	Participant Selection .....	33
3.6	Data Collection .....	34
3.7	Data Analysis .....	37
3.8	Ethics.....	38
3.9	Conclusion .....	41
Chapter 4 Findings and Data Analysis.....		42
4	Overview.....	42
4.1	Participants.....	42
4.2	Intergenerational Language Use .....	44
4.3	Cultural Meanings and Ties to Identity .....	48
4.4	Oneida Youth.....	51
4.5	Language Community.....	53
4.6	Language Regeneration/ Revitalization Practices .....	54
4.7	Conclusion .....	56
Chapter 5 Discussion .....		58
5	Overview.....	58
5.1	Findings Summary and Peer Findings .....	58
5.2	Conclusion .....	64
Chapter 6 Conclusion.....		65
6	Overview.....	65
6.1	Implications of this Research.....	65
6.2	Limitations of the Study.....	66
6.3	Recommendations for Future Research .....	68
6.4	Conclusion .....	69

References.....	71
Appendices.....	82
Curriculum Vitae .....	91

# Chapter One: I:kélhe' A:katwánu:táhkwe' Ukwehuwehnéha (I Want to Speak Oneida)

## 1. Locating Self

In many Indigenous communities, as in research, the location of oneself often begins by talking about family and often includes information of where a person resides. For example, in my own community when someone wants to know more about another person they often start by asking questions such as, “who are your grandparents?” or “who are your parents?” The response to these questions provide information that allow one person to identify another. Abolson and Willett (2004) write about location of self as integral to identifying the location from which one participates in Indigenous research. Oneida scholars, such as Eileen Antone (2000) and Lina Sunseri (2007), also begin their research with an introduction of self and a thanksgiving for all of creation. In the same regard, I begin my research proposal by locating myself as an Onáyoṭa'á:ka'.

Shekoli. Rebecca Doxtator ní: yukyáts. Ukwehuwé ni'í. Onáyoṭa'á:ka' tsi'twakatuhti. A'no:wál niwaki'taló:tá. Kanatá:ke nú: tekna<sup>h</sup>kéh<sup>l</sup>e'. Hello. My name is Rebecca Doxtator. I am one of the Original People. I come from Onáyoṭa'á:ka' (also known as Oneida Nation of the Thames), I belong to the Turtle Clan and I live in London.

My introduction in Ukwehuwehnéha (Oneida language) is an important aspect of my Indigenous identity and an important part of my story and ancestry. For me, the language is directly connected to my Indigenous identity as Onáyoṭa'á:ka'. I do not hold a lot of knowledge about my language and acquiring fluency and supporting Oneida language regeneration are life goals of mine. According to Hohepa (1998), language

regeneration means that the language has not gone extinct and does not need to be brought back to life; rather, it needs to live by having new generations speak it.

My earliest memories of language include listening to my grandparents speak it. Specifically, my maternal great grandparents spoke it exclusively to one another whenever I visited their home. I was fascinated with the language as I only spoke English. I understood it as a language that only older Oneida people spoke fluently because they were the only people I heard use it. Occasionally, a grandparent or older relative would speak to me in Oneida but they usually reverted to English because I did not understand.

When I entered kindergarten, I was taught Oneida by fluent Oneida speakers. I remember singing songs, listening to stories in the language, and learning my Oneida numbers, animals, and colours. I brought this knowledge home with me as I sang songs at home and frequently referred to the animals by their Oneida names such as “otsi’no:w $\Delta$ ” for “mouse”.

After completing grade four, I attended school off-reserve and my language learning in formal schooling environments stopped. In informal learning environments, I continued to hear the language spoken by older relatives but not in my household. I remember keeping a journal where I wrote down every Oneida word that I knew how to spell so I would not forget them. When I entered high school, I anticipated enrolment in an Oneida language course; however, there was no language teacher at my high school and the course was cancelled. I felt discouraged by the lack of support for the Oneida language and I never had the chance to take Oneida language classes throughout my years in high school.



While enrolled in university, I noticed that there were Indigenous language courses offered in other Ukwehuwé languages (e.g., Cayuga and Mohawk) but none were offered in the Oneida language (most likely for lack of Oneida presence in this area). The existence of other Ukwehuwé language courses piqued my interest in learning my language but I never looked much into it past the university courses that were already being offered at my school.

In my second year of university I had the opportunity to be involved with a “film youth camp” that took place in my community over the summer. In this camp we got to be involved in the film-making process and produce our own short films. These projects were completed through the Oneida Language and Cultural Centre since we were also working with Elders to incorporate the language. Reflecting on that time now I see this as my reintroduction into language learning as a young adult. Although I wasn’t actively learning, simply working with an Elder to translate a few lines for the film, I was still engaging with the language.

When I started a master’s degree at Western University, I chose to focus my thesis research on the Oneida language. While in the master’s program, I enrolled in a community-based Oneida language course that was part of a partnership between Oneida Nation of the Thames and the First Nations Studies program at Western University. This course was my first time learning Oneida in a school setting since attending elementary school on-reserve. I was excited about the course because it provided me with an opportunity to begin my journey as a serious student of the Oneida language, but language learning as an adult is vastly different than my language learning as a child. I was not learning songs and single words. I was learning the mechanics of the language

and how to put sentences together. The coursework was exhausting as I spent time tuning out my colonized English-speaking mindset and struggled to *think* in Ukwehuwehnéha. After successfully completing the course, I knew I had only just begun my journey toward speaking and understanding Ukwehuwehnéha. I now consider myself a language learner and apprentice. I have continued with my learning by attending weekly classes at the Oneida Language and Cultural Centre, which is located in the heart of the Oneida Nation of the Thames community. As I continue to work on acquiring the Oneida language, I seek new ways to learn and maintain it in my personal life.

In the remainder of this chapter, I share a brief overview of my topic and present the rationale and purpose of the study. I then provide the current context for the Oneida language and present a broad history of Indigenous languages and the ongoing impact of colonialism before discussing the federal and provincial schooling contexts. Finally, I give an overview of the thesis and conclude with a short section on terminology.

## **1.1 Overview**

I have generations of family members who attended Canadian residential schools and they were punished for speaking their Native language. The denial of language was just one of many atrocities that were experienced in hundreds of residential schools throughout Canada (Hanson, 2009). As a result, some of those children who attended residential schools eventually became parents and many only used the dominant languages of English and French at home. While there were instances of parents' daily usage of their Native language as a primary language, there were many others who only used it as a second language. The residential school system purposefully attacked Indigenous worldviews, languages, and cultures (Battiste, 1998). The institution as a

whole subjected children to persistent violence, powerlessness, exploitation, and cultural imperialism, creating widespread social and psychological upheaval in Indigenous communities across Canada (Barman, Hébert, & McCaskill, 1986; Battiste, 1998). Language and culture loss are real effects of this western educational institution and such effects are found in my own family.

My maternal grandmother was immersed in the Oneida language from birth. When she started school, she was expected to read, write, and speak the English language. In time, she lost the ability to converse in Oneida. As an adult, she completed high school and attended higher education institutions, even earning her master's degree in late adulthood. As an educator, she was able to teach Oneida language to Oneida students in the community. For me, I scarcely heard the language used in my household as a child, as my parents were not taught the Oneida language. The experiences of my family members cause me to reflect on the significance of the language to Oneida peoples and the various ways that people are working toward regenerating it.

## **1.2 Rationale for the Study**

Across Canada there are estimated to be 50 or more individual Indigenous languages belonging to 11 Indigenous language families (Norris, 2007). Individual languages reflect distinctive histories, cultures, and identities linked to family, community, land, and traditional knowledge (Norris, 2007). Indigenous languages have been proven to be a meaningful part of Indigenous identity by impacting a person's life in a variety of significant ways (Norris, 2007). For instance, language is described as connecting one to their community, social relationships, and their Nation's history (Norris, 2007). Indeed, Norris (2007) explains how loss of Indigenous language affects

sense of belonging, feelings of marginalization and exclusion. May and Hill (2005) claim that Indigenous participation in Indigenous language immersion programs results in promotion of self-esteem, self-confidence, and cultural identity. Furthermore, McDonald (2011) notes that First Nations languages have personal, social, and economic benefits resulting in better health, social and civic engagement, lifelong access to learning, and less involvement in the justice system. While these positive benefits are significant, many Indigenous languages are facing crises and are bordering on extinction.

Only three First Nations languages are expected to survive in Canada past the year 2050: Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut (Fontaine, 2012; Ostler, 2000). Similarly, Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty (2008) predict that 90-95% of the world's spoken languages will be extinct or severely endangered by the year 2100. There has been recent recognition given to the significance of Indigenous rights to education, language, and culture by the United Nations (UN). The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) highlights Indigenous Peoples' rights to establish, control and provide education in their own languages (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007). This right declared by UNDRIP is significant for Indigenous language education in Canada; however, it conflicts with many of Canada's government policies that control the funding, resources, and significance that is given to Indigenous languages in Canada (Fontaine, 2012). Historical acts of violence on Indigenous bodies, languages and cultures are apparent in the lack of funding, attempts to rid Indigenous peoples of their languages and culture in Canada, and forced separation of children from their families and communities in the residential school and 60s scoop eras. The 60s scoop saw Indigenous children being apprehended from their families and placed

into non-Indigenous homes from before the 1960's until the 1980s (McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne, & Day, 2016). Euro-western ideals embedded in Canadian policy, the justice system, and child welfare system made it easy for the colonial state to justify taking children from their homes and communities (McKenzie et al., 2016). Children were often placed in non-Indigenous foster or adoptive homes where many were abused, neglected, put to work, and denied their Indigenous right to their languages and cultures (McKenzie et al., 2016). All of these atrocities committed against Indigenous peoples in Canada contribute to the decline in use and passing of traditional knowledges of Indigenous languages.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Oneida is one of the Six Nations comprising the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which include: Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Tuscarora, and Mohawk. In its original name, Onoyota'á:ka,' translates to People of the Standing Stone. Oneida Nation of the Thames, of southwestern Ontario, is one of three communities that form the Oneida Nation – with the other two communities located in New York State and Wisconsin (Sunseri, 2011).

Research on the preservation of the Oneida language is noted among the Oneidas of Wisconsin (Brennus, 2006; House, 2010; Abbott & Metoxen, 2012). Lacking in the literature is a specific Oneida Nation of the Thames perspective on the significance of Oneida language to Oneida adults. This research is urgently needed and requires immediate attention due to the highly endangered status of the Oneida language (Abbott & Metoxen, 2012). There are currently only about one hundred elderly native speakers remaining in Ontario and Wisconsin (Gick, Bliss, Michelson, & Radanov, 2012).

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative research study involved investigating the significance of the Oneida language to those Oneida adults who are seeking to acquire the language and those who are conversationally fluent in order to explore ways to support language regeneration. I conducted my research in my home community of Oneida Nation of the Thames which is located in Southwestern Ontario. The following three research questions guide this study:

1. What is the significance of Oneida language to Oneida adult language learners who are seeking to acquire the language and what are they doing to regenerate the language?
2. What is the significance of Oneida language to Oneida adults who are conversationally fluent in Oneida language and what are they doing to regenerate the language?
3. What does an investigation into my personal relationship with Oneida language reveal?

#### **1.4 OnAyota'á:ka'/ Oneida context**

Oneida Nation of the Thames is one home to the OnAyota'á:ka,' the People of the Standing Stone. The original Oneida homelands are located in what is now called New York State in the United States of America. During the time of the American Revolution, Haudenosaunee territories were claimed and taken by the State of New York and distributed through land sales (Elijah, 2002). Although the American Revolution was not, arguably, a war against Indigenous peoples, they were soon solicited to join either the British or American cause. Indeed, many Native Nations in America saw the American Revolution as an English civil war that did not involve them (Calloway, 1995). The

Haudenosaunee Confederacy in particular were at peace with the Americans and intended to remain so (Calloway, 1995). The Haudenosaunee had maintained neutrality in previous North American affairs up until the point of the American Revolution, during which time the Nations had split to fight for either the British or American cause (Calloway, 1995). The Oneidas in particular had been divided, with some supporting the Americans and others siding with the British (Calloway, 1995). This split led to some of the Oneida People from the New York homelands settling in two other communities. One of the communities settled in Wisconsin in 1822 and the other in Southwestern Ontario near the Thames River in 1840 (Elijah, 2002). The Oneida Nation of the Thames community began as a settlement acquired through cash purchase in several land transactions with Upper Canada; this is where some of the original Oneida settlers from New York State (i.e. those who supported the British) decided to make their home (Elijah, 2002; Antone, 1990).

Ukwehuwehnéha (Oneida language) is considered to be a critically endangered language with less than 100 speakers worldwide (Moseley, 2010). The Oneida Nation of the Thames community located in Southwestern Ontario has cited about 40 adult fluent speakers remaining, most of whom are elderly (Oneida Language and Cultural Centre, 2018). The lack of fluent speakers, coupled with the fact that the remaining fluent speakers that do exist within the community are either adults or Elders, makes Oneida's situation a critical one. When only the adults in a community speak an Indigenous language, the language's existence is threatened as the ability to transfer the language to new speakers as a first language is jeopardized (Lewis, 2009). Moreover, Statistics

Canada (2011) reports that even when an Indigenous population reports “knowing” their Native language, it is not necessarily the main language used at home.

### **1.5 Indigenous languages and the Ongoing Impact of Colonialism**

The Indian Act was established in Canada in 1876 and remains in existence today. Under this Act and subsequent amendments, virtually every aspect of life became legislated for those who are defined as an Indian. Under an early amendment to the Indian Act, First Nations traditional cultural activities, ceremonies, and dances were banned (Hanson, 2009; Leslie, 2002; MacDonald & Hudson, 2012). The prohibitions remained in effect until the 1950s and had devastating impacts on Indigenous cultural practices, traditions, and oral history (Hanson, 2009; Leslie, 2002; MacDonald & Hudson, 2012). Another act of oppression that impacted First Nations languages was the residential school system. Under the Indian Act, the Canadian government made itself responsible for controlling every aspect of Indigenous peoples’ lives, including education, which resulted in the creation of residential schools in collaboration with Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches (Hanson, 2009; Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015).

Residential schools operated in Canada with assimilationist goals of enforcing Eurocanadian ways of living (Hanson, 2009; Leslie, 2002; MacDonald & Hudson, 2012). In these schools, children were separated from their families for extended periods of time, forbidden to practice their traditional Indigenous cultures, and severely punished for speaking their Native languages (Hanson, 2009). The goal was to eradicate and commit genocide on Indigenous peoples and their ways of living and being (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; Thielen-Wilson, 2014; Woolford, 2013). The purpose of residential schools was to



eliminate all aspects of Indigenous language and culture (Hanson, 2009) and resulted in immense damage to the Indigenous family, community, and way of life for generations. Emotional and psychological abuse was common and physical and sexual abuse was rampant (Hanson, 2009). Exposure to this abuse in conjunction with overcrowding, poor sanitation and inadequate diet and healthcare resulted in high death tolls in many of the Canadian residential schools (Hanson, 2009). Even with the residential school policy, Indian Act, and coercive policies put in place by the Canadian government, Indigenous people and culture continue to survive (Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015). Indigenous peoples and communities continue to assert their unique identities in places where it may not have existed in the past.

In addition to the residential school system, the Canadian government employed other policies and laws which make Indigenous language learning difficult in Canada. Lack of adequate funding, historical denial of Indigenous languages, and a general disregard for Indigenous languages and cultures have made Indigenous access to Indigenous knowledges and research difficult.

Haque and Patrick (2015) discuss the historical and contemporary colonial ideologies that continue to impact how Canada's social and political contexts position languages. These ideologies that position English and French as superior and Indigenous languages as primitive continue to inform Indigenous language protection (Haque & Patrick, 2015). Indigenous languages in Canada do not have equal status as English and French, which are described as the languages of Canada's "two founding peoples" (Haque & Patrick, 2015). Canada continually places English and French with equally superior status over Indigenous ones, as exemplified in dismal funding opportunities and

lack of program support for such languages. Haque and Patrick's (2015) emphasis of dominant European languages in the Canadian education system is an example of the privileging of one or more languages over Indigenous ones. This discussion of how Canadian policy creates regimes of knowledge and power by legitimizing certain Eurocentric knowledges over Indigenous knowledges is clearly stated in a report from the United Nations Special Rapporteur focusing on Indigenous peoples in Canada (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014) .

In the United Nations Report concerns are expressed for Canada's lack of support, funding, and commitment to protecting Indigenous languages (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014). The author of the report, James Anaya, mentions that two-thirds of Indigenous languages are endangered, severely endangered, or critically endangered due to acts of colonization (e.g., residential schools). Moreover, the report cites the federal Government's creation of the First Nations Education Bill which lacks "a clear commitment to First Nations languages, cultures and ways of teaching and learning" (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014, p. 8). According to James Anaya (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014), Canada's approach to privileging Eurocentric language and knowledge is quite evident. For example, there is decreasing funding allocated to First Nations education and federal government spending promotes English and French languages in amounts that well exceed Indigenous language revitalization (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014). When Indigenous languages and knowledge systems are situated as subjugated knowledges, they are placed in a low position on a hierarchy of knowledge; below a level of accepted cognition, and/ or knowledge that has never been sufficiently articulated (Olssen et al., 2004). This ideology

continues in Canada's education system when it places Eurocentric knowledge over Indigenous knowledge.

## **1.6 Federal and Provincial Scenarios**

Only in recent years have Canadian governments displayed commitment to preserving and promoting Indigenous languages in Canada. UNDRIP was first adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 and included inherent Indigenous rights to language and culture. Canada was one of the few nations that opposed the 46-article declaration. In 2016, Canada finally pledged to UNDRIP's non-binding declarations. This would seem to be a meaningful step in furthering Indigenous languages and cultures in Canada; however, as some have pointed out, Canada has yet to establish any Indigenous language as an official language of Canada, create mother-tongue-medium education systems available in Canadian education systems, or create federal and provincial legislation that ensures widespread language fluency among first and second language speakers (Galley, Gessner, Herbert, Thompson, & Williams, 2016). This is exemplified in the creation of Ontario curriculum associated with the Native Language programs beginning in 1987.

Ontario's supposed commitment to Indigenous languages is preceded by Canada's settler colonial history of denying Indigenous peoples their languages. Braun, Ball, Maguire, and Hoskins (2011) argue that school policies can result in creative non-implementation and fabrication. This results in policy (such as Indigenous language policy) being incorporated into school documents for accountability reasons rather than systemic change, policies being diluted or phased out, and/or policies being superficially implemented in schools while potential for innovation is ignored (Braun, Ball, Maguire,

& Hoskins, 2011). The consequences for insufficient financial support of provincial Indigenous language programming includes the following: no long-term sustained and equitable funding; lack of language programs developed in schools; and need for language teacher training initiatives (Burnaby, 2007; Galley, Gessner, Herbert, Thompson, & Williams, 2016).

While British Columbia and Ontario are among two provinces that have recently announced making financial investments in promoting Indigenous languages (Hunter, 2018; Government of Ontario, 2018), data shows that Indigenous populations' knowledge about their own languages is decreasing (Battiste, 1998; Galley, Gessner, Herbert, Thompson, & Williams, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2011). Even when provinces fund Indigenous language programming, there remains a variety of issues including, poor policy development, programs with only younger children in mind, inadequate funding, and bilingual programs that exist only to transition to fluency in a majority language (Bear Kirkness, 2011; Burnaby, 2007).

The introduction of Indigenous languages into provincial curriculum is a positive start; however, more needs to be done. Policy concerning Indigenous languages should be conceptualized using a decolonizing lens. Currently, there is an Official Languages Act (1969) for French and English in Canada. At the time of writing this thesis, there is a Parliament of Canada Senate Public bill S-212 titled, An Act for the advancement of the Aboriginal languages of Canada and to recognize and respect Aboriginal language rights (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2016). This Act aims to provide recognition, but not official status, for Indigenous languages in Canada (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2016). Battiste, Bell, and Findlay (2002) discuss a need for liberation from educational

colonial apparatuses (i.e. the policies, programming, and ideologies existing in education systems that promote a paternalistic, gendered, classed, racialized politics of knowledge that serve and benefit Eurocentric society). To acknowledge the history of colonial education and the benefits and privileges it allows would produce an environment in which decolonizing could take place in curricula, research, and teaching practices (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002). A decolonizing practice would see Indigenous ecologies, consciousnesses, and languages restored not only in Indigenous communities but in Canadian society at large (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002).

Some academics call for a decolonization of education in order for Indigenous students to preserve their cultural identities and languages while engaging in mainstream education (Munroe, Borden, Orr, Toney, & Meader, 2013). In this way, decolonizing education means challenging Eurocentric knowledge (Battiste et al., 2002) and situating Indigenous knowledge as localized to community contexts and significant on its own merit. Battiste et al. (2002) also discuss a decolonization of traditional Canadian presumptions, curricula, research, and teaching practices to “live up to their obligations, mission statements, and alleged priorities for Aboriginal peoples” (p. 83). Decolonizing approaches would highlight Indigenous knowledges and stories, co-construct language and cultural revitalization curriculum, and use community contexts to create curriculum (Munroe et al., 2013). This process coupled with a deep understanding of the extreme significance of language in Indigenous community, identity, and future preservation would ensure an education in which Indigenous students can thrive.

## 1.7 Thesis Overview

In this introductory chapter, I have positioned myself in relation to this study and its research, the Oneida language. I also explain the rationale and purpose of the study and the ongoing impact of colonialism on Indigenous languages in Canada. I then discussed the scenarios for Indigenous language initiatives from federal and provincial governments. I conclude the chapter with consideration for decolonizing Canadian education systems so that Indigenous knowledge and language can thrive and be supported.

Chapter two exemplifies how Indigenous methods and knowledge have been included in positive and legitimized ways in Indigenous communities. This section sets the tone for this study's research questions and relating literature which is expanded on in later chapters.

In Chapter three, I discuss the research design, participant selection, ethical considerations, data collection, and data analysis. I also situate the methodologies used in this research, Indigenous methodologies and a tribal-centred conceptual framework.

In Chapter four, I discuss the findings from an analysis of six interviews with members of the Oneida Nation of the Thames concerning the Oneida language.

In Chapter five, I revisit the overall purpose of this study which was to gain an understanding of the significance of the Oneida language to two groups of Oneida people.

In Chapter six, I discuss implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research. I also present the concluding section to this study, which includes a review of themes, research questions, and final thoughts.

## 1.8 Terminology

This section includes the terminology that is used throughout this thesis and provides clarification and context for each term. First, Canadian Eurocentric colonialism is the “imposition of Western authority over Indigenous lands, modes of production, law and government, knowledge, language, and culture” (Smith, 2012, p. 126). This is exemplified in the way colonialism has and continues to impact Indigenous lives such as through the Canadian education system. Other terms used in this document are as follows:

Decolonization is understanding and unpacking the systemic processes of domination, patriarchy, racism, and ethnocentrism that remain prominent in conventional schooling, while also centering Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous empowerment (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002). For example, decolonization in institutions would involve recreating current education systems to center Indigenous voices and identities and include Indigenous knowledges.

Educational colonial apparatuses are the policies, programming, and ideologies existing in education systems that promote a paternalistic, gendered, classed, racialized politics of knowledge that serve and benefit Eurocentric society (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002). Within this systemic apparatus of educational colonialism, there exists a hierarchy of values that promotes European languages over Indigenous ones.

Eurowestern or western research is “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (Smith, 2012, p. 30). In the context of this study, this concept is used to understand the history that centers Indigenous studies in a research world created out of Eurowestern beliefs and values.

Eurocanadian refers to European societies (based on Western notions of culture, religion, race, and class) residing in what is now Canada. It is used in conjunction with settler colonialism which is “enabled through the intersecting logistics of white supremacy, imperialism, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism” (HoSang, LaBennett, & Pulido, 2012, p. 76).

Language regeneration is one of a number of terms used to refer to the work of creating more speakers of a specified minority language; other terms include language renewal, language revitalization, language maintenance, and language preservation (Henze & Davis, 1999).



## **Chapter Two: Reviewing Indigenous Language and Identity**

### **2. Overview**

In this chapter, I present the academic literature that informed my research. I begin by outlining the connection between learning one's Indigenous language and positive identity formation. I found that there are positive experiences and outcomes associated with learning one's Indigenous language. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on Canadian Eurocentric colonialism and outline its impact on Indigenous language learning.

### **2.1 Indigenous Language and Identity Formation**

Adrienne Rich (1971) writes, "this is the oppressor's language yet I need it to talk to you" (p. 16). These words illustrate a fundamental dilemma for Indigenous people who have not acquired conversational fluency in their ancestral language. In order to articulate stories, knowledges, and experiences to others, these individuals are limited to the language of the dominant culture. The language of the oppressor is inherently deficient when it comes to adequately describing Indigenous worldviews and values (Lavell-Harvard & Lavell, 2006). Battiste (1998) goes further to suggest that Indigenous people cannot rely on colonial languages and thought to define Indigenous realities and that in doing so the "pillage" of the self is continued. Thus, Indigenous languages are highly valuable not only for cultural preservation but also concretely conveying and adopting the distinctiveness of Indigenous peoples.

Similarly to what Rich (1979) highlights as the use of the oppressor's language in place of one's own, Oglala Lakota scholar, Delphine Red Shirt (1998) brings an Indigenous lens to describing Indigenous language loss in the following:

I now watch my mother – she too is battered by time – drying up like the dew right before my eyes. She too will take with her words that her father used, words that were used in the daily course of life, before English, its sterile sounds and double meanings, invaded our world and our language (91).

The poetry that she uses paints a picture of language as more than just a tool for communication. When one's Indigenous language is replaced with an oppressive one, much more than language is lost.

According to Monture (2009), “[language] is both identity and direction. It is strength and responsibility [...] as Mohawk citizen and woman, which guides the way I see the patterns that in turn ground my understanding of who I am and what I know” (p. 119). In this description of her Indigenous language, Monture describes how it creates her identity. Moreover, the significance of learning one's Native language has been proven to be important for identity building, increased self-esteem for the learner and overall wellbeing and cultural continuity for the community and its language learners (Norris, 2007). However, correlating language to identity and wellbeing is made difficult given the complexity of Indigenous identity. As Weaver (2001) points out, there is very little agreement on what constitutes an Indigenous identity, how to measure it, and who has it. Weaver (2001) outlines various aspects of identity such as, culture, self-identification, community identification, external identification, measurements of identity, and internalized oppression. According to Lawrence (2003), Native identity is “a highly political issue, with ramifications for how contemporary and historical collective experience is understood” (p. 4). Lawrence (2003) asserts that identity, within the context of colonization, is continuously negotiated and evolving especially when discussing

Indigenous rights within legal doctrine in Canada and the United States. To compound the issue further, Indigenous communities have also defined identity as an expression of self-determination within their own legislative frameworks at the local level (Lawrence, 2003).

## **2.2 Culture and Group Identity**

Native languages embody value systems about how a people ought to live and relate to one another and gives names to relationships with family, the community, and connection with nature (Battiste, 1998). Battiste (1998) asserts, that “without our languages, we will cease to exist as a separate people” (p. 18). As Elder and language teacher, Dr. Burt McKay, suggests, “in our language, it is embedded, our philosophy of life and our technologies. There is a reason why we want our languages preserved and taught to our children – it is our survival” (First Peoples’ Cultural Foundation, 2003, p. 8). McIvor (1998) furthers the understanding of language learning as maintaining cultural roles, philosophies, and other aspects that make up one’s identity. In this understanding, language is needed not only to understand the self but also the relationships one has with others and their environment. Some scholars have also regarded Native languages as a factor in maintaining strong familial and community relationships.

There exist research studies on successful Indigenous language regeneration projects that each include the involvement and support of the community (Hermes, 2012; Hermes & King, 2013; Hermes, Bang, & Marin, 2012). Hermes, Bang, and Marin (2012) define community-based design research methodology and design-based research as redistributing power by making research accountable to and in service of communities. Furthermore, being involved in such methodologies uncover socio-historic foundations

about learning, education, and language in outsider institutions and within Indigenous communities. Including reciprocity and relationality in research might look like engagement with elders and traditional cultural practices and belief systems through locally-informed community protocols (Hermes, Bang, & Marin, 2012).

Similarly, Hermes (2012) highlights long-standing efforts of change characterized by community building and collaboration with academics across disciplines, cultures, and ideologies. Further, Hermes' (2012) discussion focuses on community-based initiatives, including participatory action research, to regenerate Indigenous languages as situated in the context of global regeneration. Hermes (2012) describes the home as the site of regeneration that involves socializing children as consistent with first language speakers' learning. This is viewed as holding the most potential for restoring and sustaining intergenerational and cross-domain regeneration as "family language policy" happening in intimate, family, and grassroots levels. Hermes (2012) concludes that language regeneration is a worldwide, grassroots, and interdisciplinary movement with the singular idea that Indigenous languages are significant for all. The researchers found language to be a significant factor for human relationships in the linguistic, social, and physical environment (Hermes, 2012). Research has led to increasing recognition of the value of ecological knowledge and practices—such as traditional food gathering practices—of Indigenous peoples and the significant extent to which knowledge is transmitted through language (Hermes, 2012; Maffi, 2005). Therefore, when language is shared and passed on through generations, so too are traditional practices.

### **2.3 Overall Wellbeing: Healthy Mind and Body**

Language is also regarded as a significant aspect of a person's overall wellbeing. It connects people to their past, future, and social, emotional and spiritual identity (Hallett, Chandler, & Lalonde, 2007). Hallett et al.'s (2007) study shows how Indigenous language use, as a marker of cultural persistence, is a strong predictor of health and wellbeing in Indigenous communities in Canada. Almost 200 distinct First Nation bands exist in British Columbia and those bands that have been able to revive their language and culture see lower rates of negative social outcomes (Hallett et al., 2007). At the conclusion of their research, Hallett et al. (2007) determined that those communities with higher levels of language knowledge (50% or more) had fewer youth suicides than those with lower levels. Further, "high language knowledge bands averaged 13 suicides per 100,000 (well below the provincial averages for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth), while those with lower language knowledge had more than six times the number of suicides (96.59 per 100,000)" (Hallett et al., 2007, p. 396). From this research, we see how Indigenous languages can be used for both strengthening identity and supporting positive and healthy holistic wellbeing among Indigenous peoples.

Fontaine (2012) reports Indigenous language immersion programs being successful in raising students' self-esteem, self-confidence, and overall cultural identity. Many of the programs Fontaine (2012) discusses are years-long programs and positively affect youth health, learning, and their social involvement in school and the wider community. This is similar to what Isaak, Campeau, Katz, Enns, Elias, & Sareen (2010) argue when they indicate that the knowledge of a Native language preserves ties to cultural past and enhances adult-youth relation and communication. Alternatively,

Fillmore (1991) argues that the language used primarily at school can negatively impact the home language. Specifically, an English only or mainly English-based school setting causes a shift at home in a child's use of home language to English (Fillmore, 1991). In such instances, Fillmore (1991) found that when children were using English at home and at school rather than their own Native language, parents—who lacked knowledge or understanding of English—used little English when dealing with their children). An outcome of using English at home resulted in negatively impacting genuine parent-child communication and familial relationships (Fillmore, 1991). This understanding of language identity, as evidenced in Isaak et al. (2010) and Fillmore's (1991) studies, suggests that language can be used as a tool to relate to others in the community. If language is used and has a part in each individual's identity then how one defines oneself will depend on their distinct experiences and geographic locations. Statistics Canada (2011) reports that in 2011 the number of Indigenous people who spoke their language at home differed based on where they lived. They found that people were more likely to speak their native language at home when living in an area with a high proportion of the population whose spoke their Indigenous language (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Jacob (2012) employs decolonizing methodology to interview community members engaged in culturally relevant language regeneration projects and activities. It was found that it was significant to listen to the needs of the community and for those needs to drive the partnership between researcher and the Indigenous community. Jacob (2012) highlights the privileging of Indigenous people's perspectives, supporting Indigenous self-determination, and having Indigenous peoples equally involved in research partnerships. In this study, language is highlighted not only as a communication

tool but also as a way to gain deeper understanding of how language contributes to spiritual wellbeing (Jacob, 2012). The acquisition of language coincides with claiming one's knowledge as rooted in the teachings of one's elders, while simultaneously honouring group-oriented and collective ownership (Jacob, 2012). This attitude "reminds us that Indigenous knowledge systems are rooted in the group's collective past" (Jacob, 2012, p. 190).

In conclusion, the research studies outlined in this chapter exemplify how Indigenous methods and knowledge have been included in positive and legitimized ways in Indigenous communities. These studies are significant for the application and significance to this study's research questions and for acknowledgement of how to do language regeneration respectfully and successfully.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This section reviews the academic literature that informed my research. The studies outline language in particular community contexts and research. In the next chapter, I present the research design and provide a background context for the interview participants.

## **Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework and Methodology**

### **3. Overview**

In this research study, I investigated the significance of the Oneida language by conducting semi-structured and conversational interviews (Kovach, 2010) with four adult Oneida language learners and two conversationally fluent speakers for a total of six participants. Since this study involved research with Indigenous peoples in an Indigenous community, it was imperative that I use an appropriate research design that is responsive to Indigenous peoples experiences.

In this chapter, I begin by providing a description of Indigenous research methodologies. I outline the research design and discuss a tribal-centred conceptual framework before presenting the Onλyota'á:ka'-centered conceptual framework that I used in this study. I then provide an overview of the participant selection for this study and discuss ethical considerations as part of conducting Indigenous research. I share my data collection procedures and approach to data analysis before closing the chapter with a brief conclusion.

### **3.1 Indigenous Research Methodologies**

For this research involving Indigenous participants, perspectives, and ideas, an Indigenous research paradigm is most appropriate. Wilson (2008) describes an Indigenous research paradigm as encompassing four aspects: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Rather than separating each onto its own, Wilson (2008) explains each as part of a circle, which he describes as inseparable and one blending into the next. Ontology and epistemology are part of a process of relationships that form a mutual reality while axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining



accountability to relationships (Wilson, 2008). Wilson (2008) describes Indigenous ontology as multiple realities or relationships. He explains how a word's meaning in an Indigenous language gives us a clue into Indigenous ontology (Wilson, 2008). In further describing Indigenous epistemology, Wilson (2008) looks to Aboriginal Australians and their use of words like cousin, brother, or auntie to name other Indigenous people: "This demonstrates an epistemology where the relationship with something (a person, object, or idea) is more important than then the thing itself" (Wilson, 2008, p. 73). I relate this concept of Indigenous ontology (Wilson, 2008) to a word in Oneida that is used to describe the Earth, *Thauhtsyawá:ku*. The translation for this may be described as "Turtle holding up the Earth". This can also be viewed as a connection to the Haudenosaunee Creation story which describes the Earth as the back of a Turtle's shell supporting all living things and beings.

Indigenous axiology relates to the concept of relational accountability; in that being accountable to one's relations and fulfilling roles and obligations in the research relationship (Wilson, 2008). Wilson (2008) explains Indigenous methodology as following axiology and adhering to relational accountability.

Absolon (2011) suggests that an Indigenous research paradigm means grounding research and methods in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Using an Indigenous paradigm involves making way for understanding Indigenous research as being relational (Wilson, 2008). Having an awareness of an Indigenous research paradigm creates shifts in ways of perceiving and conducting research in the academy (Absolon, 2011). Brown and Strega (2015) go a step further to suggest taking into account historical and present-day relations of domination and subordination in research,

and to actively promote research relations that see Indigenous communities in meaningful participation roles in research. For them, Indigenous research includes, the furthering of Indigenous knowledge, research subjects as meaningfully involved in the research process, and researcher positionality as a necessary component of socially just research (Brown & Strega, 2015).

In contrast to Indigenous research, western research has a history of portraying Indigenous peoples in problematic ways (Smith, 2012). Smith (2012) describes western research as occupying the worst excesses of colonialism that remain a remembered history for many colonized peoples. The ways in which the west desired, extracted, and claimed ownership over Indigenous ways of knowing simultaneously denied Indigenous claims to land, self-determination, language and culture, and existence (Smith, 2012). Smith (2012) explains how Indigenous research focuses and situates the broader Indigenous agenda in research spaces. These spaces, through which Indigenous research can operate, require negotiation of and transformation of institutional practices and research frameworks.

Correspondingly, when discussing Indigenous methodologies and epistemologies, Kovach (2009) defines a tribal-centred research framework as encompassing tribal knowledge, premised upon a relational perspective, with a decolonizing aim. Kovach (2009) explains the significance of identifying specific tribal knowledge as tribal affiliations must be acknowledged.

Kovach (2009) argues that being an Indigenous researcher or following an Indigenous framework “does not automatically translate into community trust. Trust needs to be earned internally” (p. 147), that is, more work needs to be done when it

comes to research with Indigenous communities. Although I followed an Indigenous research methodology and am an Indigenous person, this does not mean that I automatically had the trust of the community to conduct my research study nor does it mean that individuals automatically trusted me. Trust still needed to be built, which is a core precept of Indigenous research.

### **3.2 Research Design**

In qualitative research, semi-structured interviews aim to explore a topic more explicitly through the participants' opinions, views, and words (Esterberg, 2002). Esterberg (2002) furthers that we interview people to understand their life perspectives. Some scholars argue that interviews can be used effectively with marginalized groups that have been historically marginalized in research by not being allowed to use their own voice and experiences to portray their stories (DeVault, 1999; Esterberg, 2002; Reinhartz, 1992). As an Onλyota'á:ka' researcher, conducting research within the Onλyota'á:ka' community, my Indigenous standpoint plays a valuable role in how I make sense of theoretical frameworks and how I conduct research.

As an Indigenous researcher, I sought ways to explore the Onλyota'á:ka' – Oneida language in a way that did not silence, distort, or destroy our words, stories, and experiences. Correspondingly, when discussing Indigenous methodologies and epistemologies, Kovach (2009) defines a tribal-centred research framework as encompassing tribal knowledge, premised upon a relational perspective, with a decolonizing aim. Kovach (2009) explains the significance of identifying specific tribal knowledge as tribal affiliations must be acknowledged. In my research, an Onλyota'á:ka' perspective is essential as I am an Onλyota'á:ka' researcher looking to understand

Onlayota'á:ka' perspectives on language. Thompson (2009) argues that the real aim for a researcher is to “reveal sources of bias, rather than to pretend they can be nullified ... by a distanced researcher without feelings” (p. 208). My dual position as Onlayota'á:ka' and researcher impacted my perspectives in this study. I admit that I am not a neutral researcher without bias in this study. However, my identity and standpoint as Onlayota'á:ka' yakukwé impacts the significance of my research as I am personally invested in keeping the language alive. My Indigenous standpoint is essential to implementing a tribal centred epistemology and in conducting research with and by Indigenous people.

### **3.3 Tribal-Centered Conceptual Framework**

Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) explicitly discuss their positionalities as both researcher and Indigenous community members. More specifically, their discussion surrounds the issue of the researcher's dual position of “insider/outsider” and cultural ramifications of these relationships (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). They struggle with conventional research methods that contradict Indigenous ways of knowing (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). Smith (2012) also writes about the challenges for Indigenous researchers in conducting Indigenous research:

while researchers are trained to conform to the models provided for them, Indigenous researchers have to meet these criteria as well as Indigenous criteria that can judge research ‘not useful’, ‘not Indigenous’, ‘not friendly’, ‘not just’ [...] The Indigenous agenda challenges Indigenous researchers to work across these boundaries (142).

As I delve into the research I have gathered, I am critically aware of the understanding learned from my experiences as an Oneida woman and learning gained from dominant approaches to conducting research. Smith (2012) describes the challenges faced by the Indigenous researcher as an opportunity to gain focus and direction in navigating the complexities of systematic inquiries. Learning to work across boundaries is ever evolving as researchers work through and share in their experiences and concerns with conducting formal research.

Within a tribal-centered conceptual framework, Indigenous researchers incorporate their worldviews, beliefs, practices and protocols while making critical decisions about the inclusion of dominant methodologies and methods (Kovach, 2009). Sinclair (2003) explains that an Indigenist stance is one that actively strives to hold the rights of Indigenous people as their primary political goal while incorporating their traditions into their work. Furthermore, Absolon and Willett (2004) describe Euro-western research as “wrapped around empirical evidence and the ‘burden of proof’” (p. 10), whereas Indigenous thought is holistic, circular, and relational (Wilson, 2008). An example can be found in the way knowledge is gathered – in a Eurowestern research perspective a belief or argument would need to be proven to be true to be accepted or understood; whereas, in Indigenous research a story that has been passed on between generations would not need to be proven as “truth” to be believed. For Indigenous people, knowledge comes from one’s being, living, and doing and thus comes from within. It is with Indigenous research, Indigenous methodologies, and an Indigenist stance that I conducted my research.

Furthermore, Weber-Pillwax (1999) writes about Indigenous research being informed by research as lived Indigenous experiences. Furthermore, Indigenous research includes “theories grounded in an Indigenous epistemology, ... the sacredness and responsibility of maintaining personal and community integrity ... and the recognition of languages and cultures as living processes” (pp. 31-32). She writes about Indigenous languages in research projects as contributing to the continuous creative, spiritual, and intellectual renewal of Indigenous communities (Weber-Pillwax, 1999). Weber-Pillwax (1999) suggests that while Indigenous people live and work through two worlds, they are also forced to think and live through two languages (their Native language and the language of the oppressor). In my work, I reflect on these two roles and the importance of language used in both my personal life and academic life. Furthermore, as Hohepa (1998) argues, a language does not die; rather, new generations make the language live by speaking it. It is with this understanding that I informed my study of Oneida perspectives of the significance of maintaining the Oneida language. I have hope that the language will not cease to exist, rather it will thrive by having younger generations learning and speaking it. In the next section below, I elaborate on a OnΛyota’á:ka’-centered conceptual framework.

### **3.4 Toward a OnΛyota’á:ka’-Centered Conceptual Framework**

In my research, an OnΛyota’á:ka’ perspective is essential as I am an OnΛyota’á:ka’ researcher looking to understand OnΛyota’á:ka’ perspectives on language. I look to other OnΛyota’á:ka’ researchers to situate my research within a OnΛyota’á:ka’-centered conceptual framework – that is, a framework that can empower and situate OnΛyota’á:ka’ views and perspectives.

Sunseri (2007) reflects on how historically Western research and researchers have impacted Oneida Nation of the Thames in a negative way, often times portraying the community as problematic. She further argues that we need to be critical of research approaches practiced on Indigenous communities to ensure that they do not cause any more harm like they have done in the past; this is why an Indigenous methodology is needed when doing research with Indigenous communities (Sunseri, 2007). I would argue that a framework that acknowledges and centres Onλyota'á:ka' values and ways of being needs to be included which requires Onλyota'á:ka' knowledge. I do my best to insert Onλyota'á:ka' knowledge where it is appropriate in a research environment.

### **3.5 Participant Selection**

All of the participants in this study were members of the Oneida Nation of the Thames community in Southwestern Ontario. I identified participants by using purposeful sampling. Creswell (2007) defines purposeful sampling as selecting “individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 125). Further, this type of sampling is used when a sample population has been selected for a specific reason (Kovach, 2009). As Mears (2012) explains, “while not seeking randomness, you need to be intentional in making your selection and that requires preparation” (p. 24). Moreover, Esterberg (2002) explains that purposeful sampling is useful when the researcher intentionally samples research participants for the specific perspectives they may have.

To recruit participants for this study, I used recruitment posters and a social media and social networking service to invite people to participate (e.g., Facebook). In order to

make contact with my target group of participants, I received permission from the Director of the Oneida Language and Cultural Centre to have an electronic copy of my recruitment poster posted to their Facebook page, which many Oneida community members regularly view for their interest in the language (for a copy of the recruitment poster see Appendix E on page 92).

In my study, I recruited participants based on two groups of criteria. In the first group, I enlisted adult Oneida language learners (n=4) who were either beginning their language learning journey, had already started learning the language, or were self-proclaimed learners of the language. All of the participants in this first group considered themselves to be “not fluent” speakers of the Oneida language. In the second group, I included conversationally fluent speakers (n=2) who learned the Oneida language as a first language and maintained it through adulthood, or who had learned as an adult and who considered themselves conversationally fluent. Overall, I recruited four adult Oneida language learners and two conversationally fluent speakers for a total of six participants.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

After obtaining ethical approval from Western University’s research ethics board, I conducted six semi-structured conversational interviews with community members from the Oneida Nation of the Thames settlement. Interviews are especially useful for this study because it allows for the exploration of firsthand thoughts and experiences of Oneida people through their personal narratives. Kovach (2009) describes conversational interviewing as a non-structured method of gathering knowledge that can be responsive to Indigenous epistemology and sharing stories. She suggests that sharing a story is a means of knowing as reflection, and through sharing a story a dialogue can be fostered



between Indigenous researcher and Indigenous participant. Smith (1999) also writes about the significance of the approach used in conducting interviews in an Indigenous community. She suggests that researchers may need to negotiate many levels of entry when seeking information, establish long-term relationships, and create networks with families, communities, and organizations in order to conduct interviews in a particular community (Smith, 1999).

In my study, emphasis was placed on the story sharing process. After I confirmed that participants understood the content in the Letter of Information and they signed the consent form (see Appendix 1), I presented each participant with a small gift and an offering of tobacco. In the Oneida Nation of the Thames community, gift giving is a show of respect for the participant's time and demonstrates respect for the knowledge that is shared (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014). I elaborate further on respectful Indigenous protocol in the section below on ethics and Indigenous research.

After I received permission from participants to digitally audio record the interviews for subsequent transcribing and analysis of the information collected, I then asked participants to share their thoughts and experiences surrounding the Onʌyota'á:ka' Oneida language and revitalization efforts within their community. I took care in giving each participant the time, space, and consideration needed to share their story with me. As a consequence, I gathered rich and meaningful storied data from the participants and through the sharing process we were able to closely relate to one another (Kovch, 2009).

Furthermore, this culturally-responsive approach ensured that we entered the discussion with a good mind.

During the semi-structured interviews, I used an interview guide to assist in maintaining consistency across the participant group but I also encouraged and participated in a conversational approach with each individual. Having a set of guiding questions to ask participants ensured my comfort level with the interview process, which I feel is consistent with what Kovach (2009) explains in the following: “to provide openings for narrative, Indigenous researchers use a variety of methods, such as conversations [and] interviews [because] it provide[s] a forum for people to relate their stories in a holistic fashion” (p. 99).

As is consistent with the conversational method, I followed a list of questions that I asked each participant. I used two interview guides, one for the fluent speakers (see Appendix 2) and one for the language learners (see Appendix 3). According to Kovach (2010), “the conversational method employed is best described as a dialogic approach to gathering knowledge that is built upon an Indigenous relational tradition. It utilized open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to prompt conversation where participant and researcher co-create knowledge” (p. 44).

The semi-structured design in my study allowed me, as the researcher, to pose additional questions. Ashley (2012) argues that semi-structured interviews prove to be more deeply probing and strategic in nature. She further suggests that during the semi-structured phase the same types of questions be asked of all participants in broadly similar ways and allows for the collecting of information from a range of informants, across a potential range of sites, and in a comparable format (Ashley, 2012). Further,

Mears (2012) describes semi-structured interviews as inviting participants to share their experience and understanding.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

In this study I relied on content analysis as a process that assisted me in highlighting common themes emerging from participant responses on Oneida language learning, maintenance, and regeneration in the Oneida Nation of the Thames community. The goal of content analysis is to code and categorize participant responses so that similarities and differences can be highlighted (Mayring, 2000). Qualitative methodologists describe a process for interpreting data that include the following: data is collected, themes are identified, categorized, and synthesized with comparisons and contrasts noted with validation completed by checking back with participants (Creswell, 2007). For the purposes of this study, which was to find the importance of language between language speakers and learners, I analyzed the data from both groups together. This approach of combining the data worked for this study because there were similar themes across the two groups.

In analyzing the data, I read each of the interview transcripts in their entirety multiple times and I also listened to the audio recordings of the interviews several times. After listening and reading through the interviews, I discovered reoccurring themes. I then highlighted quotes in the transcripts that related to the overall themes and I wrote up the findings. I also assigned and included self-selected pseudonyms for each participant in the final write up.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue what makes a good narrative is beyond reliability, validity, and generalizability. Seeing as this study uses narrative inquiry,

stories, and personal experiences with language, Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) discussion of writing the narrative is applicable. They maintain that stories are between the general and the particular, ultimately mediating the personal, practical, and concrete demands of living (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). They argue that the stories we collect function as arguments in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life or community as lived (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In this research study, I needed to gather the participants' thoughts and beliefs surrounding the Oneida language; the stories were more important than finding facts or validity. The challenge for the narrative inquirer is to undertake this and embody these dimensions as much as possible in the written narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In this study the stories and experiences that were collected needed to be shared in a way that was true to that person as Ukwehuwé. Many Indigenous communities today are finding ways to be more engaged in research so that Indigenous voice is not lost or misconstrued as it has historically been in western research.

In this next section, I discuss the ethical considerations for this study, especially as it relates to conducting Indigenous research. While all research must adhere to ethical standards and institutional protocols in academic settings, research involving Indigenous peoples must be carried out in way that is respectful, ethically sound, and inclusive of Indigenous perspectives (Louis, 2006).

### **3.8 Ethics and Indigenous Research**

Smith (2012) writes about Indigenous peoples' historic relationship with western research as problematic as it has often objectified and dehumanized Indigenous peoples. This history, Smith (2012) argues, has caused:

new pressures which have resulted from our own politics of self-determination, of wanting greater participation in, or control over, what happens to us, and [...] have meant that there is a much more active and knowing engagement in the activity of research by Indigenous peoples (p. 41).

I adopted Smith's understanding of self-determination when I stepped into my role as an Oneida researcher. I take the position that our stories and voices are told and represented from the standpoint(s) of how I/we convey what our language means to me/us as Oneida people. Through a declaration of self-determination, Oneida perspectives of our language is paramount and an extension of our inherent right to use and safeguard our language.

Before doing any recruitment for this study, I acquired the approval of Oneida Chief and Council (OCC) to do my research in the Oneida Nation of the Thames community. In chapter nine of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, it describes research specifically involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014). The guidelines for research involving Indigenous peoples and issues includes engagement with the community (Article 9.1) and refers to being informed about formal rules or oral customs that apply to the First Nation's authority, the cultural heritage concerning artifacts, knowledge or unique characteristics of the people, and the appropriation of collective knowledge that may cause harm or offence to the community (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014).

Thus, I took specific steps before beginning my research study. I began with a presentation to the OCC at the political office in the Oneida community in June 2017. At the meeting, I discussed my research aims, questions, and hopes to recruit participants from the community. At the conclusion of the presentation, OCC gave their approval for me to conduct my research within the community. In addition to the presentation to OCC, I also delivered a community information session at the Oneida Language and Cultural Centre where I described my research and outlined my plan for recruiting participants (see Appendix 4). By engaging with the community to clarify mutual expectations and obligations through the OCC presentation and general community information session I endured that the project was determined jointly by researcher and community as is consistent with the TCPS (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014).

As mentioned previously, giving and accepting tobacco symbolizes entering into a respectful relationship with another person. In this study, both tobacco and a small gift was presented to each research participant after concluding the interview, which is consistent with ethical protocols involving research with Indigenous peoples (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014; Kovach, 2009; Struthers, 2001). Moreover, in Haudenosaunee societies, sacred Indian tobacco may be used to pray or honour ancestors, among other ceremonial uses (Freeman, 2010). In the context of my research, offering Indian tobacco and a small gift

acknowledged the reciprocal relationship and respect for the participant's insights being offered (Kovach, 2010).

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter outlines this study's use of Indigenous research methodologies and tribal-centred conceptual framework. Within this research design, I explored Onlayota'á:ka' experiences and themes. I also reviewed this research study's participant selection, data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations in Indigenous research. In the next chapter, I present and interpret the findings from my study that included themes found across the two participant groups.

## **Chapter Four: Findings and Data Analysis**

### **4. Overview**

In this chapter, I present and interpret the findings from an analysis of six interviews with members of the Oneida Nation of the Thames concerning the Oneida language. I begin the chapter with a discussion of the participants' background before presenting the findings.

#### **4.1 Participants**

The participants I interviewed represent the diverse Oneida speaking community. The participants ranged from young adult to Elder with a variety of proficiency levels in their speaking skills. Some individuals were beginning their language learning journey; some were well into the study of language having completed language courses and programs, and others were well-versed in the language having grown up speaking it at home. Pseudonyms are assigned to each of the six participants to maintain anonymity. Overall, I interviewed six community members. Two individuals—Sarah and Michael—self-identified as conversationally fluent speakers (herein Study Group 2), and four individuals—Emily, Drake, Victoria, and Julia—self-identified as language learners (herein Study Group 1). The demographics for the research participants are shown in Table 1.



Table 1: Research Participants

Pseudonym	Age (Young Adult <29, Adult, Elder)	Sex	Nation	Residing in	Language Group
Emily	Young Adult	Female	Oneida Nation	Oneida Nation	Learner
Drake	Young Adult	Male	Oneida Nation	London, Ontario	Learner
Victoria	Young Adult	Female	Oneida Nation	Oneida Nation	Learner
Julia	Adult	Female	Oneida Nation	London, Ontario	Learner
Sarah	Elder	Female	Oneida Nation	Oneida Nation	Conversationally Fluent Speaker
Michael	Adult	Male	Oneida Nation	Oneida Nation	Conversationally Fluent Speaker

As illustrated in Table 1, a relatively diverse population of participants participated in the study with participants ranging from young adult to Elder and four females and two males. Most of the participants resided in Oneida Nation of the Thames with two living outside of the community. All of the participants self-identified as an Oneida community member and either as a learner or conversationally fluent speaker of the language.

Once I began to analyze the data, I found that there were similar topics and themes shared by study group one and study group two; therefore, I decided to analyze results from both groups together under the same themes. The themes that were uncovered across both groups suggests that both learners and speakers of the language hold similar beliefs about the importance and need for the language.

In the next section, I present the research findings where each overarching theme for both study groups is discussed. My analysis of the data revealed the following themes: a) Intergenerational Language Use, b) cultural meaning and ties to identity, c) Oneida youth, d) language community, and e) language regeneration/ revitalization practices.

#### **4.2 Intergenerational Language Use**

This section concerns the generational differences in language that participants discussed. From differences in language use between generations, to hopes for future generations, Oneida language had a different history with each participant and their family. For instance, the community is losing fluent speakers at a very rapid rate. There are estimated to be less than one hundred elderly native speakers remaining in Ontario and Wisconsin (Gick, Bliss, Michelson, & Radanov, 2012). More recent research suggests the number of speakers now to be around 60 worldwide (Oneida Language and

Cultural Centre, 2018). As one fluent speaker, Sarah, pointed out, Oneida is rapidly losing speakers:

Even when all the speakers are gone, like I said we're disappearing. When I started 25-30 years ago we had 263 speakers and now we're down to about 43 so what's it going to be like in another 20 years or 10 years even?

Sarah makes an important point. The number of speakers in Oneida is decreasing every year; this makes the community's role to learn the language more vital if the language is to survive into the next twenty years and beyond. Another participant, Emily, describes the importance of Elders and fluent speakers in language learning: "putting them in roles where they can share that language and pass it on is really important." Even in her own learning of Oneida Emily highlighted the connections and support from Elders and speakers as encouraging her to continue her own learning. She goes on to say that such roles can be implemented in educational settings such as day cares, elementary schools, and secondary schools.

Emily, who is a language learner, describes children and youth as the key to our language surviving:

It needs to be a lifelong learning journey for them if they're not first language speakers. That's, I hope, within my lifetime, that we start to have some first language speakers again [and] that we get our language up as far as we can, that we can really speak, [and be] conversationally fluent [and] to have our kids be able to really embrace their language.

She argues that it is important for our language to be passed down to children. There have been generations of parents who have not transmitted or been able to learn the language

because of colonialism. Residential schools and the lack of importance placed on Indigenous languages as a result of settler colonial influence in schooling is still impacting Indigenous peoples today (Hanson, 2009; Haque & Patrick, 2015). This highlights the need to educate our children in our Oneida language, which is a theme that all of the language learners discussed. All of the language learners argued for the need to teach their children or future children the Oneida language and this was often a main reason to learn it as an adult.

Many participants also described older generations as being a source of motivation for learning Oneida. As one language learner (Victoria) stated, her fluent speaking grandparents were huge influences on her rationale for learning Oneida:

It was when my grandfather passed was really [what] pushed me to be like okay this is for sure what I want to do. 'Cause he passed before my grandmother did and I used to be able to listen to them talking and, let's just say we were out to dinner and I could hear them speaking in Oneida together and I slowly started to understand. I mean now it would be different because I can understand better and I was like oh I can pick out words and I got excited about it. Hoping, I guess, to talk to them one day.

Victoria expresses a desire to converse with her grandparents and an admiration for their ability to speak Oneida to one another. Their knowledge of the language prompted her learning, which was a common among other participants as well. Another language learner, Drake, discussed the fact that he had grandparents and great-grandparents that spoke Oneida: "I just think it's something important for our family and for me personally. As a way of [...] honouring those ancestors." Drake also described how his grandfather

lost the knowledge of the language soon after attending western schooling institutions, and reclaiming the language is a way to honour his family and ancestors who had learned Oneida. Similarly, Julia, cited her grandmother, who is a fluent speaker of Oneida, as one of the motivating factors for her to learn her language. Michael, too, cited his grandparents as fluent speakers. He described how he often heard them speaking Onʌyota'á:ka' to each other and it made him wonder what they were saying. Michael recalled an early memory that stands as a motivation for him to continue his language learning journey, as he comments in the following: “The way my grandmother spoke the language was just really soothing to listen to and I just remember thinking when I was a little kid like oh, I want to learn to talk like that.”

Most of the Oneida language speakers and learners cited older generations of their family as motivation for their own learning journeys. In my own life, my family members have also been motivators for learning my language. My maternal great grandparents had attended residential school and lived and worked in and around communities that were not welcoming or safe for Indigenous people. As a result of their life experiences, they adopted the perspective that a life learning English was better than a life learning the Oneida language. Thus, when my grandmother (the eldest child of her family) became old enough to attend school, her parents stopped speaking to her in the language in order for her to excel at learning English. This disruption started a generational cycle of not speaking Oneida because parents did not transmit the language to their children. This interruption occurred on both the maternal and paternal sides of my family. Thus, as a child, I was not taught Oneida in the home as my parents could not speak it themselves. However, I still heard Oneida spoken in the community and during my time listening to

my grandparents and great-parents' conversations. I remember these members of my family fondly and I often think of them when I learn a new word or phrase or listen to a conversation in the language.

All of the language learner participants described a need to educate their own children in the language, which included those who did not yet have children. I can say the same for myself, that I see the importance of teaching my future children their Oneida language. The manner in which they learn will depend on future resources that may be available (i.e., storybooks, apps, toys, games, television, language program, fluent speakers, etc.). I wish to expose my future children to as much rich language as I can so I continually work to do my part in language regeneration through my own learning.

#### **4.3 Cultural Meaning and Ties to Identity**

A significant number of participants repeatedly stated that Oneida language aided in positive identity development as Ukwehuwé (Native/Oneida people). Emily described how language is important in this development when she suggests, “language [...] helped me understand who I am, what makes me Oneida [...], and helps to recognize the different worldviews we have and understand the importance of that and to recognize who we are.” She further states that this is why language is so important to community and to ensure there are opportunities for community members to learn.

Similarly, Drake discussed access to the language as significant to his identity as an Oneida person, “I think it’s important to include Indigenous languages and [...] with my own personal [...] history as Oneida in a settler colonial relationship”. He described reclaiming language as a way to reclaim his Oneida identity. Further, he described growing up off-reserve and how this impacted his access to language and culture as a

young person. Many of the participants also identified the need to maintain their Indigenous language to better Oneida lives. This is exemplified in Drake's self-reflective comments when he described the Oneida language as a way of "exploring what it means to be Oneida. [...] What does that mean in actual practice of how I live in the world and how I relate to the world?"

Julia emphasized how the language holds teachings about life. She pointed out certain ceremonial teachings and Elder wisdom as articulated through Oneida language. She suggested that the only way to access certain teachings is to understand and speak the Oneida language. From life teachings, such as birth to rites of passage, to death ceremonies, most cultural events explicate meaning through the language, thus, its importance in Oneida identity is apparent.

Similar to Julia's experiences, Victoria describes language as tied to understanding Oneida culture and teachings. In particular, she tells how languages ties us to who we are as Oneida, "I see it being used by people who are proud of who they are [...] it's like they found who they've been looking for and it's in our language." Her understanding of language illustrates how it helps with developing identity and as something that makes Oneidas unique. Sarah describes a similar sentiment, as she explains:

My mother always valued our language because she always said when it comes time for you to go back to our Creator's land, that's what he's going to do, he's going to ask you what your name is in the language because that is the language he gave our people.

Sarah described a need to know the Oneida language in a spiritual sense and to understand that it ties the people to their beginning, their Creation, their beliefs and

practices. She punctuated its significance when she suggested, “it is what identifies us as Oneidas, is our language. Nothing else will identify us as Oneida.” It is clear from Sarah’s comments that the language distinguishes Oneida from other Nations too, specifically other Ukwehuwé Nations.

Michael, a fellow conversationally fluent speaker, described the significance of Oneida language in cultures, such as learning ceremonies and songs:

from different Elders and in the mid 90’s we lost a lot of Elders in the Longhouse and we look around and all of a sudden there’s nobody there to sing [these songs] so I was asked to learn those songs.

In the example Michael describes, it become clear that Oneida language and culture are linked. An individual needs the knowledge of the songs, language, and ceremony in order to understand and be responsible for sharing that knowledge with others in the future.

As many of the participants discussed, Oneida language is used to create and distinguish a unique Oneida identity. In my own life, Oneida has been important for me to maintain. By attending school in both on and off-reserve settings, I had exposure to education that included and excluded the Oneida language. However, even though my educational access to language was limited, I was still exposed to the Oneida language in my community. Listening to older generations of family members use the language, I developed a fascination for the language. As a child, it was a language only older adults and mainly Elders used fluently. As an adult, I see the value in language as I feel it defines who I am as OnΛyota’á:ka’. As many of the Oneida participants describe, the language connects to cultural understanding, teachings, and spirituality. Without the



language, I am simply a Native person, but with the language I am uniquely Onayaota'á:ka'.

#### **4.4 Oneida Youth**

Emily described the importance of language, especially for youth when she suggested that “understanding how much it helps...them with who they are [and] where they come from, can alleviate those identity issues.” She argues that hearing and encouraging the use of the language among youth can help them understand that it is valued, important, and makes up who they are as Oneida. Normalizing the use of the language valorizes Oneida heritage and maintains a positive sense of self.

Julia also identifies youth as a group that would benefit from language learning. She argues that youth, and young children in particular, tend to learn language quicker than adults. She has observed this pattern in her own household as she explains, “I’ve found it harder to learn as an adult but [I] also need to, in order to support my son as much as I can. He is only 9 years old but he picks up the language a lot easier than I can.” Throughout her interview, Julia often mentioned her son (who receives instruction in Oneida as an ancestral language at school) and the difference between the amount of time and effort spent on her language learning compared to him. She observed how he learns the Oneida language more easily than her which is aided by the amount of time exposed to more language (e.g., at school).

Julia points out that learning Oneida is extremely important especially for youth as it teaches them life skills and Oneida worldviews that are inherent in the language. Victoria highlighted similar sentiments regarding Oneida language and positive

identity/sense of self; as it can help people flourish and live again. She describes the language as “being used by people who are proud of who they are.”

Victoria discusses the positive aspects of learning language and describes how it can be extremely beneficial to youth; a group who often struggles with identity in Indigenous communities across Canada (Fontaine, 2012). Victoria suggested that youth issues, such as depression, can plague a community and she felt that giving them access to knowledge such as language can help them cope as she states in the following comment: “I want to see them have a reason to be here and see what something like our language can do for people.” Michael had similar sentiments as he explained that the Oniyota’á:ka’ language is used throughout ceremony. He sees the need for young people to step up and learn the language and ceremonies before Elders pass on and can no longer share that knowledge. From Michael’s perspective, language can be viewed as preserving and continuing identity and culture.

Sarah recalled only speaking Oneida in her home until she started in Westernized forms of schooling at the age of 7 years old. This resonates with me and what I know of my own family. My great-grandparents and grandparents of my maternal and paternal families learned the Oneida language from the time of their birth, as it was used exclusively in the home. The place of learning (i.e., the family home and other social community settings) contributes to a cultural linguistic group identity for previous generations of my family and is a key component in culture and group identity formation, overall. For me, learning and speaking the language is a part of who I am. To be able to understand, converse in, introduce and explain myself in the language is important to me. It is a personal life goal of mine to be able to converse in the language. I work at this goal

by reading stories in the language, reviewing familiar and unfamiliar words using technology (e.g., an Oneida language mobile app on my phone), taking part in weekly language classes, and utilizing the Oneida language and cultural centre's website.

#### **4.5 Language Community**

As discussed in the previous section, learning one's Indigenous language can help in maintaining a positive sense of self and identity. One way to develop this through language learning is conversing which requires two or more people. This topic of conversing in the language was brought up multiple times by participants. A language learner, Emily, highlighted the need to hear the language being used in real-life settings, whether it is in conversation with Elders or with friends. She also described people as "language resources" who motivated her to learn and supported her language learning.

Drake also highlighted this concept of needing to speak the language with people. He specifically discussed wanting to teach his family any new words he learned and described needing a "communal atmosphere" in order to better his Oneida language acquisition. Sarah, too, emphasized an Oneida language community as being important in the following:

It was fun because all...around my area where I grew up we all spoke the language and there was no English. [...] English was never heard in my house, my brother was fluent, my mom and dad, my grandparents, my aunts and uncles, even my cousins around my age. We all spoke [the Oneida language].

As a fluent first language speaker, Sarah's experiences with the language are obviously different than a learner acquiring Oneida as an ancestral language. Moreover, her understanding of a language community will be different from someone who is learning

as an adult. As Galley, Gessner, Herbert, Thompson, and Williams (2016) point out, Elders are often the only fluent speakers in a First Nations community and are often actively involved in language programming and initiatives. In Sarah's case, her role as a fluent speaker is very important to the language community and the community at large.

In my own experience, I have also found it helpful to have a "community" of language learners to be a significant part of my learning. Since beginning my research on the Oneida language, I have joined weekly language classes in the community. I also have a group of friends who are interested in the language, involved in learning to speak Oneida and provide me with extrinsic motivation to learn the language. For example, whenever any of them share a new word or phrase with me, I try to work out what it means or get them to tell me how to pronounce the word. The positive benefit of learning my ancestral language alongside my friends has the additional value of bringing us closer together. Overall, the more I get involved with language initiatives, the more I discover an expanding language community. In this language community, I feel supported by community members, friends, and family. I never realized that such a group existed before getting involved with my Oneida language.

#### **4.6 Language Regeneration/ Revitalization Practices**

As part of this study, I chose to ask participants about the language resources that they use to help support their language acquisition. As a language learner, I have a personal interest in expanding my growing collection of Oneida language resources. I also have an interest in furthering language learning and language use in the community.

One learner, Drake, described the use of Oneida-English translations of texts such as stories to aid in his learning in addition to taking part in language classes. Julia listed

language programs and the Oneida Language and Cultural Centre website and its resources as sources for supporting her language learning. In addition, she described her grandmother as a fluent speaker and someone she goes to regularly for Oneida language immersion. The role of Elders was once again highlighted as a vital resource and emphasized many times in the participant stories. Emily, too, stressed the significant role that fluent speakers have played in her life and how Elders have made a significant positive impact on learners' language acquisition. It is clear from participants' comments why many language communities seek Indigenous traditional teaching methods, cultural teachings in schools, and Elders who hold such knowledge. These pedagogical approaches along with Indigenous knowledge keepers are a key part of maintaining conversational fluency and transitioning from first language to the target Indigenous language (Assembly of First Nations, 1990).

In terms of future language use, Drake describes the value of having more language immersion in workplaces. For example, a secretary would be able to communicate in the language when answering phones or greeting people coming into the office. He also mentioned the importance of maintaining the use of the language beyond the boundaries of the Oneida Nation of the Thames community. A fellow language learner, Victoria, also stresses the need to maintain the use of the language inside as well as outside of the community. This might look like normalizing use of the language in social places (the mall) or when doing everyday things (grocery shopping). Drake and Victoria understood that making the language accessible and applicable to everyday life is vital for language vitalization efforts and every place needs to be turned into a language immersion environment (e.g., even when traveling outside of the community to

shop, travel, and go to school or work). It is also important to instill the value of the language in others, including children and youth. The Oneida language should be understood to apply everywhere we go in life.

A few of the participants also described language programs for their children to attend, including language nests. Language nests have been used by other Indigenous communities worldwide to promote their languages and cultures, such as the Maori peoples in Australia (discussed in chapter 5). Currently, Oneida does not have a language program that promotes language use for babies and children. Some of the participants, including myself, see the need and importance of immersion programming for the youngest members of the community. We all need to be thinking about the future of the Oneida language.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

To conclude, I presented and interpreted the findings from my study with six Oneida language community members. The themes that I uncovered from the data included the following: Intergenerational Language Use, Cultural Meaning and Ties to Identity, Oneida Youth, Language Community, and Language Regeneration/Revitalization Practices. Intergenerational language use includes the elders that inspire the community and ensure that children of the community will be the future speakers of the language. The cultural meaning and ties to identity theme outlined the ways that Oneida language ties the community to their identity as Onλyota'á:ka'. In this theme I presented on the significance of Oneida stories, ceremonies, values and beliefs, among other things that involve supporting the transmission of the language. The Oneida youth section provides an overview of Oneida language as cultural continuity for youth and

helping in developing a strong sense of identity, something that is crucial for Indigenous youth living in Canada today. In the language community theme, I shared what participants discussed as it related to language learners' observations about the need and significance for having a language community when learning the language. Finally, in the last theme, language regeneration/revitalization practices, the participants outlined different resources that they use to support their language learning and what they felt is needed for the language to continue for generations to come.

In the next chapter, I discuss the findings and examine some recent research related to themes found in this study.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

### 5. Overview

The findings of this research study indicate that there is high importance for learning and transmission of the Oneida language. Given the endangered status of the Oneida language (Abbott & Metoxen, 2012), this research provides further evidence of the risk for language extinction, and the urgent need for action that supports regenerating and revitalizing the Oneida language.

In this chapter, I present a summary discussion of the research findings along with peer findings.

### 5.1 Findings Summary and Peer Findings

This research study involved uncovering the importance of Oneida language in the lives of Oneida language speakers and learners. The findings are not mutually exclusive to each group and each theme uncovered in the data made the similarities explicit. In this section, I revisit each of the five themes and discuss the consistencies or inconsistencies of the findings with the academic literature.

**Intergenerational Language Use.** The findings from the intergenerational language use theme revealed the following: rapid decline in Oneida fluent speakers, fluent speakers as being crucial to the survival of languages, and the need to transmit the language to children. These findings are consistent with language research studies involving Indigenous peoples in Canada and abroad. For example, language fluency among the Maliseet First Nation in New Brunswick is approximately 10-20 percent of its population, and most of those individuals are 60 years of age or older (Bear Nicholas, 2011). When a community's language is kept alive by Elders, the younger generation



needs to do their part to keep the language alive. As Glasgow (2010) suggests, a community should work to promote early-childhood language learning to ensure its language survives. Indeed, New Zealand language-nest initiatives promote both language and culture and strengthen language use both at school and in the home (Glasgow, 2010). Glasgow (2010) argues that children need to learn in authentic settings and call for traditional Indigenous ways of learning as suggested in the following: “children will be exposed to history, traditions, metaphor, and the [age-appropriate] mastery of their traditional language. This allows a people’s beliefs, world views, ontology, and epistemology to contribute to the early-childhood programme” (p. 130). As many of the participants in this study suggest, one of the main actions to combat decline in use of Oneida language is to educate our children in the language while simultaneously giving them a base for cultural continuity.

**Cultural Meaning and Ties to Identity.** Oneida language learners and speakers alike discussed the importance of Oneida language for cultural continuity. In the cultural aspect, language plays a huge role to help define who we are and what we do as Onlayota’á:ka’. As Norris (2007) argues, language tells us who we are, creates our identity, and ties us to our history, land, and communities. In my study, in order to keep Oneida culture and traditions alive, participants revealed a need to know the language for cultural continuity. This finding is consistent with a research study involving Nehiyawak Elders in Canada. Iseke and Ndimande (2014) found that Elders emphasize language and its importance and community as suggested by one participant in their study:

That’s the difference when we speak our language and when we speak English.

The language is dynamic, the language that we speak, Nehiyawewin. . . . It’s got

an instant connection, so your worldview is changed right away; everything is changed when you think in Cree and you start speaking that. It's a whole different perspective that you have of life, as opposed to English, which is a noun-based language, and it objectifies things (p. 153).

Similarly, Ukwehwehnéha (Oneida language) is used to convey meanings and feelings that often cannot be described in English; Oneida speakers reiterate the fact that you cannot simply translate an Oneida phrase into English and/ or an English phrase into Oneida because the meaning will change. It is similar to the changing perspectives concept Iseke and Ndimande (2014) highlight with Nehiyawewin and English.

This concept of language being used to explain and understand Oneida worldviews and beliefs was also mentioned by learners and speakers in this study. Language is needed to provide direction and description of Oneida culture and customs while participating in ceremony, while hearing our Creation stories, and while explaining Oneida beliefs about life. Oneida language is more than just a means of communication, it is what defines us as a people and differentiates us from other nations.

**Oneida Youth.** Many of the participants in this study insisted that the Oneida language can have a positive impact on youth lives. This finding parallels what Bear Nicholas (2011) argues when she suggests that language and immersion programs result in lower rates of poverty, addiction, incarceration, and suicide in First Nations youth. Moreover, findings from other studies have uncovered that First Nation communities that preserve or are working towards preserving their languages and cultures see less rates of youth suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 2004; Hallett, Chandler, & Lalonde's, 2007). According to Chandler and Lalonde, (2004), language and cultural continuity have

proven to help First Nations youth with identity formation and arms them with ancestral knowledge that may be a way to “help themselves”. Similarly, Hallett, Chandler, and Lalonde (2007) found that First Nations communities with higher levels of language knowledge have fewer suicides than those with lower levels. The authors also found that higher levels of language knowledge resulted in cultural persistence (i.e. continuation of cultural customs) and a strong predictor of health and wellbeing in such communities (Hallett, Chandler, & Lalonde, 2007).

House’s (2010) study also found positive impacts that emerged from language learning among Oneida secondary students in Wisconsin, U.S.A. For Oneida Nation High School graduates, language learning benefited family, ethnic identity, and Oneida Longhouse culture (House, 2010). Positive identity was formed through things such as developing peace of mind, knowing who you are, and your roles and responsibilities as a community member and member of the Oneida Longhouse (House, 2010).

**Language Community.** Participants highlighted a need for real-life conversation with Elders or with family and friends in order to continue their learning. Participants also highlighted the value for developing a language community where a community of people can focus on the revitalization of the Oneida language. Kirkness (2002) suggests that working together for language revitalization is part of the solution but there is another key component as she explains in the following:

we must work together, whether it be as a family, a community, or on a national level. We must take stock of where we stand in respect to our languages. If we are ‘for saving our languages,’ then we must assess what each of us is prepared to do about it. (p. 22)

She argues that a community must decide their course of action, whether it be an effort put forth on a family or community-wide front (Kirkness, 2002). Further, a community must be willing to bring together language families and establish long range plans to ensure community leadership and government will support and sustain Indigenous languages (Kirkness, 2002). Language learning is more than one person's experience, it is a communal decision as is suggested in the following: "language embodies the way a society thinks. Through learning and speaking a particular language, an individual absorbs the collective thought processes of a people" (Little Bear, 2000, p. 78). The use of relationships within Indigenous languages is important for establishing community values, beliefs and customs. Indigenous languages are used in social situations and in ceremony (Little Bear, 2000). In my study, as is consistent with Indigenous language research, participants stressed the need for a community of language learners and speakers to ensure the language survives.

**Language Regeneration/ Revitalization Practices.** Research suggests that in order to ensure a language will survive the community's youth need to be engaged (Bear Nicholas, 2011; Glasgow, 2010). Galley, Gessner, Herbert, Thompson, and Williams, (2016) cite language nests and language use in the home have both proven successful in creating young fluent speakers. Under the theme of Language Regeneration/ Revitalization Practices, participants in my study highlighted the importance and need for immersion language programs, language nests, language courses, and identified language resources that aided them in their language journeys, which is all evident in research involving other Indigenous communities (e.g. in New Zealand and Hawai'i).

McCarty and Nicholas (2014) discuss language practices in different Indigenous communities, including the regeneration of Kanienkeha (the Mohawk language) in Kahnawà:ke. The immersion programs in Kahnawà:ke produced a dramatic reversal of language shift among young people in the 10-19 years age group within the first twelve years of program implementation (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). McCarty and Nicholas (2014) also reported on full-immersion Hawai'i language reclamation processes for children's programming through to college preparatory curriculum in the language, and immersion programs in Hopi and Navajo schools as promising advances for youth and communal language use. Overall, language research has shown other practices besides traditional school programming to aid in language regeneration and revitalization.

Similar to the academic literature, participants in my study emphasized the importance of conversation with fluent speakers and identified the significance of language immersion environments. They also saw a need to make Oneida language use more than just being used in community-based environments. In Whitney-Squire's (2016) study, key language initiatives held at the Haida Heritage Centre and Haida Gwaii Museum included the following: paid staff-time to learn the language; encouraging tour guides use of the language; greeting visitors in the languages; working with Elders to develop content; evening language talks; and language use in interpretive and promotional materials. All of these initiatives beg the question, why cannot these same practices be applied to all lands now occupied by settlers? One act of Indigenous resistance discussed by Whitney-Squire is the use of signage to create a visceral connection to place, the community, and ancestors as witnessed in Native Hawai'i. As suggested by the author, "these signs draw on a shared ancient and modern day history,

the community's choice to translate or not, and express tangible and intangible meanings involving travel, food gathering, and symbols of wealth" (Whitney-Squire, 2016, p. 1165). This use of signage relates to Tamaira's (2017) explanation of affirming Indigenous presence and claim to ancestral lands. In their research, Tamaira (2017) addresses how Hawaiian artists use discursive spaces of public walls to affirm Indigenous sovereignty and US colonialism. Artist intervention thorough wall graffiti projects illuminated the power of public art to inspire Indigenous communities and inform the broader public about ongoing Indigenous concerns in Hawai'i (Tamaira, 2017). In order to normalize the Oneida language participants suggested more use of language in the community – signage and graffiti projects may be a solution that can involve the youth.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This discussion chapter revisited the themes uncovered in the study to engage the academic literature on Indigenous language to illustrate the consistencies and departures within the field. By examining major themes from the data analysis, I provided greater insight into how Oneida language impacts individual community members and the Oneida community as a whole. In the final chapter I close out the thesis with implications, limitations, and recommendations. I end with a short conclusion reflecting on what I gained from the research project.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6. Overview**

In this chapter, I present an overview of the implications of this study, identify limitations and highlight recommendations for future research. I end with concluding thoughts.

#### **6.1 Implications of this Research**

This research study and topic are needed given the decreasing number of fluent speakers and the status of the Oneida language as endangered. Conducting this research has brought to my attention the ways language is being regenerated and revitalized in the Oneida Nation of the Thames community. From the work of language teachers, to online language resources, there are many places community members are finding and using language.

This study highlights ways to further promote language use. Such as immersion courses, language nests, and language use in the workplace, many participants brought up ways language can be implemented in different areas of the community. The need to normalize Ukwehwehnéha in Oneida, greater Oneida community, and beyond will ensure use by future generations. As highlighted in this study, youth are important in this vision as they will be the ones who will need to use and pass on language to their children and grandchildren.

Participant responses also draw attention to the ways ancestral language use is important; for cultural, health and wellbeing, and developing positive sense of identity as Onayota'á:ka'. This study reviews the ways community members find use and importance for continuance of the Oneida language.

## **6. 2 Limitations of the Study**

This research study focuses on the learning, maintenance, and regeneration of the Oneida language in Oneida community members' lives. As with any carefully considered research study, there are limitations. In this section, I review the kinds of responses I thought I might capture before data collection began. I also outline the following limitations of this study: length and types of responses, sample size, and lacking conversational fluency in the Oneida language.

Before data collection began I had some ideas about what I was hoping to uncover in this research. One was to find that the regeneration of the language was important to Oneida people and the overall community. I was also looking for ways people were accessing the language; whether it was through creating a new generation of speakers, designing and accessing language resources, and taking advantage of language classes available to community members.

There were a few challenges I faced while conducting this study. Although the data I gathered was significant and related to the research questions, the participant responses were not as detailed as I initially anticipated they would be. There were no extensive narratives from which to draw lengthy quotes from. I think there are a few reasons for this. One being that I am a novice researcher and am only now, in my educational career, beginning to learn how to ask, respond, and pull responses from participants. Another factor is my relationship to the participants. As a researcher looking for information, regardless of the topic or subject matter, I am coming into the relationship as more than just a community member, but in the role of researcher. This researcher-participant dynamic makes the relationship problematic in terms of how much



a community member may be willing to share with a research, even if that researcher is also a fellow community member.

An additional limitation I found was the small sample size, which limits the generalizability of the study findings. However, the small sample size allowed me to spend an efficient amount of time with each participant and to analyze the results carefully within the timeframe of a master's thesis. Moreover, the purpose of the study involved focusing on the lives of those residing in the Oneida Nation of the Thames territory where the transferability of the findings to others who are on their language learning journey was of most importance.

Another limitation of the study relates to me not being a linguist, an Oneida language expert, or a fluent speaker. For convenience and time, I chose to conduct my interviews in English. The struggle I face in this limitation is, as stated earlier, I am aware that the language of the oppressor cannot adequately express Indigenous worldviews and values (Lavell-Harvard & Lavell, 2006; Monture, 2009). I fully understand that the use of a colonial language is not sufficient for explaining Indigenous meaning and feeling. I offset this limitation by using an Oneida worldview and Indigenous epistemology to explain worldviews and concepts where it is necessary and plausible. Negotiating the world of Indigenous peoples and the world of research is a negotiation that proves to be a complicated, challenging, and interesting space (Smith, 2012). Moreover, I am at the beginning of my language journey and this research project is presented as the early steps toward my goal of becoming conversationally fluent. By conducting research on the Oneida language, I am able to use the findings to inform my language learning journey.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research should include a larger and more diverse participant population. A larger sample would result in more relevant data surrounding language revitalization practices and themes relating to language, identity, and culture. It would also be beneficial to include data or to correlate findings with those from other Oneida communities.

I also feel that it would be useful to interview educators in the Oneida language field to discover their successes and challenges in teaching the language. Some future topics of study include, language education policies, interest and motivation for language learning among youth, and participatory research in the development and use of language resources.

A concept that was discussed was whether those armed with ancestral language saw better life outcomes. This is discussed by Hallett, Chandler, and LaLonde (2007) further study on this topic would be useful.

One last recommendation from this study for language regeneration involving the theme of intergenerational language use. All of the participants related the significance of youth and the importance of learning the language. Most, if not all, of the participants described a desire to teach their children the language. One of the most cited ways for successful language transmission in children and youth is to have successful language programs and language nests. As Bear Nicholas (2011) discusses the most promising way to produce lifelong fluent speakers is to have the language of medium in schools be the Indigenous language of a group. With language immersion education and language nests there is less need to consciously teach traditional culture, values, and beliefs because they

are embedded in a community's Indigenous language (Bear Nicholas, 2011). I would recommend that language initiatives be properly funded and properly resourced. While Oneida Nation of the Thames has made significant strides through organizations like the Oneida Language and Cultural Centre, we have yet to see Indigenous languages funded to the extent that English and French are financially supported in Canada. Indigenous peoples have the right to expect adequate financial funding.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This research study surrounding the Onlayota'á:ka' language makes a critical contribution to the dearth of academic literature focused on the study of Oneida language. According to UNESCO's (1996) Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing, "any language that is not learned as a 'mother tongue' by at least 30% of a community's children needs to be considered seriously 'endangered'" (p. 392, Hallett, Chandler & Lalonde, 2007). With less than 50 fluent speakers living today, Oneida Nation of the Thames has a dire need to regenerate the language and to get the next generation to speak and pass on the language. Further research on the Oneida language is critical. There is a need to uncovering the best approaches for contributing to language revitalization among Oneida people. There is also a need to better understand how language interacts with Oneida identity and culture. This study makes a small contribution to those efforts.

**Last words.** Throughout this thesis, I reflected on my experiences with the Oneida language. I shared my early life experiences (from my childhood memories listening to family speak Oneida to taking part in Oneida language at school) to where I am now in my master's research work. My re-introduction into Oneida language started

when I decided to focus on Oneida language as part of my research. This led me to take an Oneida language summer course, weekly classes, and become more involved in language initiatives that take place within the Oneida Language and Cultural Centre and the larger Oneida community. My adult journey with the language has allowed me to meet and work with people who are inspired and dedicated to work with Oneida language, and I feel very privileged to be able to work with and learn alongside learners and speakers of all ages and language levels. I am especially grateful for the Elders I have met who have helped me, and who continue to work with me and answer my language questions when I approach them. My desire and need to learn my language has never left me. I just needed to reignite the fire to regenerate my language learning journey. Doing this research has made me realize that with the knowledge of Ukwehuwehnéha, I am maintaining my identity as Onλyota'á:ka'. If there is anything I have learned from my experiences thus far in my life, it is that I have a long way to go to become conversationally fluent in the language, but I am well on my way.

After each interview with the six participants I asked what each had to add or comment on in terms of the study and questions I had asked. A few of the people I interviewed wanted to convey to others learning the Oneida language that they should keep going and not give up. So, I leave you with this phrase: λskwení nλ kih khale takλ' nλsa'nikulyak!

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## Appendix A: Letter of Information and Informed Consent



### LETTER OF INFORMATION

#### *Learning to Remember: An Investigation into the Regeneration of the Oneida Language*

##### **Invitation to Participate**

She:ko'li. Rebecca Doxtator ni' yu'kyats. Ukwehonwe ni? i'. On?yota?a:ka tsi?twakatuhti. A?no:wa'l niwaki?talo':t?\_Hello. My name is Rebecca Doxtator and I am a master's student in the Faculty of Education at Western University. You are being invited to participate in this research study about the Oneida language because of your interest and/or knowledge of the Oneida language.

##### **Purpose of this study**

The Oneida language is highly endangered with only about one hundred elderly speakers remaining in the world. The purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate the significance of the Oneida language to those who are seeking to acquire the Oneida language and to those who are conversationally fluent in order to explore ways to support language regeneration.

##### **If you agree to participate**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to share your perspectives on what the Oneida language means to you and what you are doing to regenerate the language in an interview that will last about one to two hours in total. A follow-up interview of approximately one hour may be requested to clarify details from the initial interview. All interviews will be digitally recorded and then transcribed in to text for analysis. If you do not agree to digital recording, you may still participate in the study. Field notes will be collected to provide a record of the interview. Depending on your home location and ability to travel, scheduling interviews will be coordinated with you and take place in a booked room in Western's University's Faculty of Education or at a place of mutual convenience in the Oneida community. Please note that any ideas or comments that you share may be included in my thesis and may be published in academic journals and presented at workshops or academic conferences.

##### **Risks, harms and potential benefits**

There are no known or anticipated discomforts associated with participating in this study. You may not directly benefit from participating in this study but information gathered may provide benefits to society as a whole which include:

- Understanding why Oneida community members engage in learning the language and to aid in developing strategies to support language regeneration
- Assist new language learners in understanding the language's significance and to share how Oneida people are working to regenerate the Oneida language



**Voluntary participation and rights of participants**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer individual questions or withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you up until the participant data is in aggregate form. If you wish to have your information removed please let the researcher know.

**Confidentiality**

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. While every effort will be made to protect your information, there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. If data is collected during the project which may be required to report by law we have a duty to report. The researcher will keep any personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of 5 years. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to the study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. A list linking your pseudonym with your name will be kept by the researchers in a secure place, separate from your study file. The researcher is aware of any obligations for reporting information to outside agencies (e.g., information about abuse of minors to CAS, or other such information) that may arise in this study.

**Compensation**

While there is no compensation for participation in this research, you will be presented with an offering of traditional tobacco and a small gift as is customary in Oneida cultural traditions. In addition, those who choose to meet for an interview at Western University will be eligible for reimbursement of parking (approximately \$3 per hour up to \$9).

**Contacts for Further Information**

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Rebecca (principal contact) or Brent at the following:

**Doctoral Student Researcher  
(principal contact)**

[Redacted contact information for Doctoral Student Researcher]

**Principal Investigator  
(doctoral supervisor)**

[Redacted contact information for Principal Investigator]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca).

***This letter is yours to keep for future reference.***  
**CONSENT FORM**

***Learning to Remember: An Investigation into the Regeneration of the Oneida Language***

**Principal Investigator: Dr. Brent Debassige**

[Redacted contact information for Principal Investigator]

[REDACTED]

**Student Researcher:** Rebecca Doxtator

[REDACTED]

I have read the Letter of Information, I have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate in this research study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

Do you confirm that you have read the Letter of Information [or the Letter of Information has been read to you] and have had all questions answered to your satisfaction?

**YES**  **NO**

Do you agree to participate in this research?

**YES**  **NO**

Do you agree to be audio-recorded?

**YES**  **NO**

Do you consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research?

**YES**  **NO**

Participant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date (*DD-MMM-YYYY*): \_\_\_\_\_

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol – Group 1

Interview questions for group 1 (conversational/Native speakers) will include the following:

1. Can you reflect on your language learning journey? (When did you begin learning the language)
2. What are your earliest memories around hearing or speaking the language?
3. Why is the language important to your life and the lives of others (e.g., your family, community)?
4. Do you think it is important for Oneida youth and adults to learn the language?
  - a) More so for youth or adults? E.g., youth will grow up with the language but adults may be able to reach more people in present day to pass on to such as children and grandchildren
5. When do you use the Oneida language? (e.g., when speaking with others, at ceremony)
6. Where else should language be used? Or, where would you like to see language being used? (e.g., in schools, at home)
7. Have you passed on the language to your family and/or community?
  - a) If yes, to who and how? E.g., to family members through oral language.
  - b) If no, what has stopped you from passing it on?
8. Have you accessed any resources about the Oneida language? (e.g., dictionaries, videos, language classes)
  - a) If yes, what were they and how are they helpful to learning the language?
9. What do you think is being done or can be done to keep the language alive?
  - a) What roles do specific community members play in keeping the language alive? (e.g., roles of youth, Elders, new speakers and fluent speakers).
10. What do you see for the future of the Oneida language? What would you like to see?

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol – Group 2

Interview questions for group 2 (adult language learners) will include the following:

1. Why do you want to learn the language and for what purpose (e.g., educational, personal, familial)?
2. What has inspired you to learn the language? Or, what prompted you to actively seek this information?
  - a) Has one person or experience helped you start your language learning journey? (e.g., a family member, a language teacher)
3. What resources have you accessed in order to learn the language? (e.g., dictionaries, videos, language classes)
  - a) How were these resources helpful to your learning?
4. How does the language relate to your life and the lives of others (e.g., your family, community)?
5. Do you think it is important for Oneida youth and adults to learn the language?
  - a) More so for youth or adults? E.g., youth will grow up with the language but adults may be able to reach more people in present day to pass on to such as children and grandchildren
6. When do you use the Oneida language? (e.g., when speaking with others, at ceremony)
7. Where else should language be used? Or, where would you like to see language being used? (e.g., in schools, at home)
8. Have you passed on the language to your family and/or community?
  - a) If yes, to who and how? E.g., to family members through oral language.
  - b) If no, what has stopped you from passing it on?
9. What do you think is being done or can be done to keep the language alive?
  - a) What roles do specific community members play in keeping the language alive? (e.g., roles of youth, Elders, new speakers and fluent speakers).
10. What do you see for the future of the Oneida language? What would you like to see?

## Appendix D: Information Session Script

Handout: Distribute a copy of the Letter of Intent and Consent form to everyone who is in attendance.

Script.

She:kóli and thank you for coming to today's information session. My name is Rebecca Doxtator and I am Turtle Clan from Oneida Nation of the Thames. I am also a Masters of Arts graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Western University. The purpose of this presentation today is to give you some background information about my research study, which is focussed on the significance of the Oneida language to Oneida Nation of the Thames community members. Specifically, I am interested in talking to people about how they are supporting language regeneration in our community. When I say, 'language regeneration,' I mean that I am interested in learning about language activities that place a focus on new generations of community members speaking the Oneida language. While I do not hold a lot of knowledge about my language, acquiring fluency and supporting Oneida language regeneration are life goals of mine.

In reading research articles written by scholars and language practitioners, I have learned that the Oneida language is considered to be endangered as there are less than 100 fluent speakers worldwide. In our own community of Oneida Nation of the Thames, the number of fluent speakers drops with each year that passes. I am aware of community-based programs that are in place to support language regeneration efforts such as those here at the Oneida Language and Cultural Centre. I believe this is important work and I want to thank the Director of the Centre, Mary Joy Elijah, for hosting this session and allowing me to give this presentation today.

Currently, I am in the recruitment phase of my research study and I am interested in speaking to two groups of people in the community:

- In the first group, I want to interview Oneida community members who are just starting, or interested in starting, their Oneida language journey.
- In the second group, which may apply to many of you here today, I would like to interview Oneida community members who are conversationally-fluent or master speakers of the Oneida language.

If you feel that you belong in either of those two groups, I am inviting you to participate in my research study. Please be aware that by attending today's information session you are in no way obligated to participate in the study; however, if you agree to participate, you will be asked to share your perspectives on what the Oneida language means to you and what you are doing to regenerate the language in an interview that will last about one to two hours in total. A follow-up interview of approximately one hour may be requested to clarify details from the first interview. All interviews will be digitally recorded and then transcribed in to text for analysis. If you do not agree to digital recording, you may still participate in the study. Field notes will be collected to provide a record of the interview. Depending on your home location and ability to travel, scheduling interviews

will be coordinated with you and take place in a booked room in Western's University's Faculty of Education or at a place of mutual convenience in the Oneida community. Please note that any ideas or comments that you share may be included in my thesis and may be published in academic journals and presented at workshops or academic conferences.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. While every effort will be made to protect your information, there is no guarantee that I will be able to do so.

Further details regarding your potential involvement in this study can be found in the handout that is titled, Letter of Information and Consent form.

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Rebecca Doxtator (principal contact), or my thesis supervisor, Brent Debassige, by using the contact information provided on the handout.

Of course, you are free to ask me questions now too.

Yawáko!

## Appendix E: Information Session Script



Learning to Remember: An Investigation Into the Regeneration of the Oneida Language

She:kóli! My name is Rebecca Doxtator; I am Turtle Clan from Oneida Nation of the Thames and a Master of Arts student at Western University. You are invited to participate in a research study about the Oneida language, its importance to Oneida people, and ways to support language regeneration.

An information session will take place for anyone interested or wanting more information:

Location: Oneida Language and Cultural Centre

Date: TBD

Time: TBD

Participation in this study will involve one to two interview sessions lasting between one to two hours. The location of the interview will be subject to your convenience (either in Oneida Nation of the Thames or London, Ontario).

If you would like more information on this study, please contact Rebecca or her supervisor at the following contact information below:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Yawáko





## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** **Rebecca Ray Doxtator**

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** Brock University  
Bachelor of Arts (Honours)  
Bachelor of Education  
2015

Western University  
Master of Arts  
2018

**Honours and Awards:** Ontario Graduate Scholarship  
2016-2017

**Related Work Experience** Occasional Teacher  
Thames Valley District School Board  
2017-Present

Curriculum Development  
Oneida Language and Cultural Centre  
2017-Present

Research Assistant  
First Nations with Schools Collective  
2018-Present