

# **Menominee Language Revitalization: Recovering and Reclaiming Language through Indigenous Discourses**

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Indigenous languages are becoming extinct. Loss of language relates to loss of culture. In an attempt to save their Indigenous language, the Menominee Nation of Central Wisconsin instituted Menominee Language Revitalization Programs (MLRPs). This study investigated the impact of intergenerational language transmission on Menominee identity and MLRP sustainability. Using qualitative research methodologies involving observations and interviews this study included four elders, eight speakers and sixteen learners participating in the MLRPs. Narrative inquiry was used as a methodology to privilege the voices of the language participants. Indigenous Discourses was co-opted and used as an analytical tool in the analyses of the narratives. Within identified themes of representation, power, voice and authorship, sub-themes of language, land and culture emerged. The following implications were made: (a) historical conditioning of each generation influenced their teaching/learning of the language and (b) the experience of language learning was a move toward (re)building a Menominee national culture. The tension between these first two resulted in (c) a sense of obligation to sustain the Menominee language and culture. Implications for participant-research collaboration and culturally relevant pedagogy were made when participants identified the importance of Indigenous epistemologies as strategies in the language learning.

*If we don't get our Menominee words back we might have to speak English for the rest of our lives. And that's why Menominee language is very important to me—Menominee student learner*

One hundred years ago a main problem facing Indigenous people of North America was one of biological survival. Today the challenge is to survive as Indigenous, to retain an Indigenous identity, yet participate fully in western society (Battiste, 2000; Smith, 1999). Today in the United States, according to the U.S Census (2011) 169 Indigenous languages are still spoken. Of these languages, at current rates of language shift, 45 are on the verge of extinction and another 90 are predicted to disappear by the year 2050 (Francis & Reyhner, 2002). Indigenous language revitalization programs exist to counter this threatened language shift, the systemic exchange of one's own distinct historical language for a different one.

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The purpose of this paper is to a.) explore Indigenous identity within the context of Menominee language revitalization programs (MLRPs), a nation located in central Wisconsin, and b.) hear Indigenous voices in order to identify successes and challenges they've ascertained coming from MLRPs. Simultaneously collaborating with a Menominee mentor and applying notions of relationality, respect, responsibility, reciprocity and accountability to her work with Menominee elders, speakers and learners (Lemley & Teller, 2014), Lemley (1) observed multiple language programs in the schools and in the community and (2) interviewed elders, teachers and students involved with MLRPs. Originally, Lemley planned to produce a written document and separate the generational voices to compare and contrast the stories they told. However, discussing the stories with Teller, Lemley came to understand how the voices influenced one another's sensemaking of identity and program sustainability. So, for this paper we intertwined the voices of all three generations to show how they're talking with and amongst one another.

In this paper, we will first introduce the research site, the Menominee Nation. Then we will present the methodology Lemley used, narrative inquiry, which she employed for the purpose of gathering stories of the language participants. Within this section, we will discuss Indigenous Discourses, an analytic tool we used to further understand the Menominee communities' commitments to learning language. Next, we will provide language participant voices and discussion. Finally, we will present findings and recommendations.

### **Menominee Nation**

In the early seventeenth century, a group of Algonquian speaking Indigenous people of North America, among them Ojibwe and Menominee, occupied much of what is now the state of Wisconsin. The Ojibwe and Menominee tribes were known as the Upper Great Lakes people (Kubiak, 1999). Manomini, an Ojibwe word for "wild rice" is thought to be one origin of the Menominee tribal name (Swanton, 2003), while Grignon (1998) asserts the Menominee name for themselves is "Kayaes Matchitiwuk" which translates into English as "ancient people." The U.S. federal government forced the tribe to cede most of its original 9,500,000 acres of land by 1848. Today the reservation is located in central Wisconsin and comprises 235,000 acres (Loew, 2001).

The Menominee are Wisconsin's oldest continuous residents, having lived on this land for at least 5000 years. The Menominee were historically a hunting and gathering people and are one of only a few surviving tribes to still live on their aboriginal land. Their cultural roots in the forest and knowledge of forestry management allowed the Menominee to remain steadfast against earlier attempts at forced assimilation.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Menominee reservation was one of the wealthiest Indigenous people of North America because of its logging operation. The federal government wanted to stop giving money to support tribes and decided to perform a trial run of a "termination" idea on the Menominee because the Menominee's logging operation appeared strong enough to support

the nation without further federal funding. Termination, a neo-colonial era, had disastrous effects that still reverberate today. The Menominee Nation went from being one of the wealthiest tribes to the poorest. And the loss was not just economic. Menominee culture, language and land were also jeopardized by the hardships of those years.

The tribe first became federally recognized as a nation in 1854 and then was unofficially terminated in 1954, officially in 1961. 1954-1973, however, were years of great hardship as committed Menominee fought hard to regain tribal status and decolonize the effects of Termination. They started this journey of decolonization on December 22, 1973 when President Nixon signed the Menominee Restoration Act and declared the Menominee “Indians once again.” Restoration has been a continual decolonizing process.

In 2010, schools on the reservations included a day care facility, two Head Start sites, a tribal school (K-8), a public elementary school (K-5), a public middle school (6-8), a public high school (9-12), CMN (tribal community college), and East-West University (four year accredited institution). Menominee language courses were mandatory in all grades of the tribal school (K-8) and in the primary and middle public school system (K-5 and 6-8). Menominee language courses were offered as an elective in the public high school (9-12), CMN and East-West University. All speakers facilitating classes at these institutions were second language speakers, having learned from fluent first language speaking elders. Fluent speaking elders committed to intergenerational language transmission served as the foundation of the MLRPs, primarily training adult speakers. With this context in mind, we will next position ourselves and present the methodology Lemley used to gather the stories of the language participants, narrative inquiry.

### **Methodology**

As Catherine Riessman (1993) states, “The construction of any work always bears the mark of the person who created it” (p. v). As co-authors of this paper, we will provide information about each of us. Lemley positions herself through the following lenses (a) her views as an individual within communities and (b) her views as a researcher within a public institution of higher learning. She is a middle-class, white, bilingual woman who grew up in the Midwestern region of the United States. She now works in a College of Education at a large (approximately 24,000) 4 year public city university in the southwestern United States. Throughout her scholarship and teaching, she is committed to using power and privilege to address issues of social justice and equity. She believes stories, particularly those of historical marginalized populations, unlock knowledge to interrupt inequities that exist. She uses critical narrative inquiry as a methodology in her research to illuminate meaning from lived experiences and to privilege voices, particularly voices of historically marginalized populations in the United States (e.g., people who are Indigenous and undocumented).

John Teller is a Menominee Indian born at the Indian Hospital in Keshena, Wisconsin. He states, “Growing up on the reservation, I did not really recognize the poverty conditions that existed because it seemed that most people on the

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reservation grew up under low socio-economic conditions.” In the 1950’s and 1960’s, the Menominee Language was on the decline, however, Teller notes that, “it seemed that many people of varying ages still frequently spoke and understood the language.” Teller married at the age of twenty and soon thereafter attended college and earned a college degree in education and began teaching Menominee Language and Culture in the newly formed Menominee Indian School District schools. “I have spent the last forty years learning the Menominee Language and pursuing and promoting the spiritual lifeways of the Menominee People.”

### **Narrative inquiry**

Narrative inquiry represents a paradigm shift toward a more humanistic and language approach of gathering stories (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). Lemley used narrative inquiry methodology to study language revitalization efforts of language participants actively teaching and learning Menominee on the Menominee Nation. In addition, narrative inquiry was used to gain an understanding of the Menominee view of their language programs, and their participation in them, through the stories they told (Narrayan & Sood, 1997).

The Menominee language, like many indigenous languages of North America, is verb-oriented, meaning that concepts are expressed more often through verbs than through nouns. For example, when Lemley collaborated with Teller about words to use and translations to consider, for the translation of “teacher,” he provided a Menominee word that translated in English as, “one who speaks” and for “student,” Teller provided a Menominee word that translated to English as “one who learns by observation.” To acknowledge these Indigenous Discourses, Lemley altered initial titles of “teacher” and “student” to “speaker” and “learner.”

As stated above, the setting is the Menominee Nation, an Indigenous community. Teller is a Menominee member, fluent Menominee speaker, and has served multiple leadership roles for the Menominee Nation (Menominee Chairman, Menominee language teacher, Menominee Language and Culture Commission Chair, and Menominee College Associate Dean). Lemley is neither Menominee nor Indigenous, and she had the opportunity to work with Menominee Nation language participants (elders, speakers, and learners). During the school year, Lemley attended Menominee language classes at the tribal school, public elementary and public high school, on an average of one-two days a week. Lemley attended elder language sessions held for Menominee language teacher training each week they met. Lemley conducted interviews with four elders, eight speakers, and sixteen learners.

Our unit of analysis was a generation. The three Menominee generations in this study were a) first language speakers (elders), b) second language speakers learning from first language elders (speakers), and c) second language speakers learning from second language learners (learners). We compared these three generations within and across each other. Lemley used Nvivo software to detect, code, and organize these themes.

Lemley transcribed each interview and used inductive analysis strategies to identify themes. In the first pass, she identified five categories based on the responses: power, voice, representation, authorship, and reflexivity. Next, she looked inside each category and, according to an elder's interview, identified sub-themes: culture, language and land. After identifying the narratives that represented the themes, she wrote analytic memos relating to each theme with each participant. She then looked across memos, themes and participants to see what emerged, discussed findings with Teller and repeated the process within the identified themes. She reiterated this process several more times and determined four categories as a focus: power, voice, representation and authorship. For this paper, we will focus on the category of "representation."

### **Indigenous discourses**

Indigenous Discourses is a term co-opted from considering literature by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1994) and James Paul Gee (1996, 1999). Ngugi inspired Lemley to consider using the term "Indigenous." When speaking of learning African heritage languages, Ngugi writes,

In my view, language was the most important vehicle through which power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. . . . We learned to value words for their meaning and nuances. Language was not a mere string of words. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning. (p. 436)

Ngugi underscores the importance of language as communication as well as language as culture carrier. Learning language has multiple complex and intertwined purposes.

Lemley co-opted the term "Indigenous Discourses" according to Ngugi (1994) and Gee's (1996) work. Considering language as more than grammatical use and communication as more than language use, Gee touched precisely and directly on that which Lemley was trying to articulate: language and its interrelationship with individual ways of knowing. Like Ngugi (1994), Gee posits that language is more than communication and serves as an "identity kit" that signifies membership in specific groups. Gee explains that "Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (p. 127). So, Discourses are more than language and include ways of displaying an allegiance to a social group. Gee also explains that "Discourses 'capture' people and use them to speak throughout history; people 'capture' Discourses and use them to strategize and survive" (1996, p. 149). The Menominee elders', speakers', and learners' narratives describe how their language programs enable them to recover their Indigenous language and reclaim a voice through which they can describe and enact what being Menominee means to them.

In this paper, we offer Menominee and English translations for the category, "representation" and its subcategories, "culture, language and land." Ngugi

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(1994) inspired Lemley to obtain these translations when she read the following passage from his work:

As a writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion that the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as a medium of expressions. I have endeavored in my words to keep as close as possible to the vernacular expressions. For, from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people. (p. 435)

As mentioned before, the Menominee language, like many Indigenous languages of North America, is verb-oriented, meaning that concepts are expressed more often through verbs than through nouns. For example, representation translates to “at this time, I stand up.” Teller translated the four themes. Direct translations did not exist; he needed to understand how Lemley was using the word contextually to determine appropriate translations. In the following passage he explains how he arrived at the translation for “representation”:

I never thought about it but culturally, when you stand up like that, that’s an important thing, you know. And the prayer belief that everybody sits and then the one that’s going to speak stands up and the point being that the Creator can see who the one is, you know, see clearly the one that is talking. (Menominee speaker, personal interview, July 8, 2005)

Within representation, we further explore concepts of culture, language, and land. First, culture is an elusive term with multiple definitions. We will focus on culture in regards to language preservation efforts. Linguists, like Hinton and Hale (2001), identify three reasons to care about language preservation: loss of culture, scientific knowledge, and human rights. We will focus on the first, loss of culture. Hinton and Hale ground theories of language loss in terms of culture:

the loss of language is part of the loss of whole cultures and knowledge systems, including philosophical systems, oral literacy and musical systems, environmental knowledge systems, medical knowledge and important cultural practices and artistic skills. The world stands to lose an important part of the sum of human knowledge whenever a language stops being used. Just as the human species is putting itself in danger through the destruction of species diversity, so might we be in danger from the destruction of the diversity of knowledge systems. (p. 5)

The language participant narratives we provide substantiate the claim that MLRPs transmit cultural practices like harvesting wild rice, offering tobacco as a sign of

respect, and promoting pride through positive and distinct Menominee identity. Historically conditioned within and among the three generations, the elders, speakers and learners participate in different activities and traditions.

Second, language is more than the use of words. Lemley extends Ngugi's (1994) definition of language as both a form of communication and carrier of culture to specifically include the concepts of Menominee culture, language and land. Ngugi explains that communication between people serves as a foundation for intergenerationally transmitting an evolving culture. The Menominee language participant narratives demonstrate this phenomenon with the language, history and traditions passing from one generation to the next. Communication influences culture building. At the same time, culture building influences how people communicate, in particular how they perceive themselves and their culture.

Finally, land contains literal and figurative space. Basso (1996) writes "what people make of their place is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth" (p. 7). Menominee tribal members revere their reservation land and the resources it affords them; the reservation has provided them a homeland and a means to survive and thrive as a community. The language participants expressed an obligation to maintain the land for future generations and want to learn its history in order to sustain its foundation.

The language participants gave their individual stories, which "talk to each other" in that they have similar themes even though the interviews were done separately. We have chosen and positioned the narratives so that the reader might see some emerging themes. The narratives provided repetition of values and beliefs reverberating across the three generations. Intergenerational transmission of Menominee language and culture and land permeated the words, thoughts and ideas in the narratives. In addition, intergenerational transmission of Menominee identity and pride were evident throughout the narratives. We invite the reader to validate or depart from our interpretations and to consider how these narratives support Indigenous Discourses analyses.

### **Menominee elder, speaker, and learner voices**

#### *Netāqtan netaeseqnaesewen* ("I have my own culture")

**Representation of culture:** As previously mentioned, a possible origin of the Menominee tribal name comes from an Ojibwe word "Manomini," which means "wild rice." Menominee language speakers and their learners talk about this translation in their Menominee language classes during the fall rice-harvesting season. During Lemley's interviews with the learners, some learners described their Menominee identity using this English translation. In addition to discussion of the purpose of wild rice, some actually gathered the rice while others shelled the rice in their Menominee language classrooms. This cultural tradition may have influenced the learners during the interviews to associate being Menominee with actions they completed. Ketākāhsaehkiw, a learner, included the translation as part of her description of being Menominee.

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Indigenous, wild rice people, proud, cultured, we have lots of culture, and we're trying to get back to our old beliefs. (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 18, 2004)

Ketākāhsaehkiw expressed a pride in her identity linked to acts of being as well as doing. She was the only language participant to use the word “Indigenous” in her description of “being Menominee,” but her emphasis on reconnecting with the past occurred in other narratives. Language participants described reaching this goal by following ancestral teachings to maintain cultural traditions, values and beliefs.

Otaeciah, another learner, used “wild rice” in his description of Menominee identity and highlighted notions of respect through his description of how to demonstrate this act:

In general, I would learn that we are the people of the wild rice, they respect animals and everything and they give them tobacco before they go spearing. Like before we [go spearing], we put out some naeqnemāw [tobacco] for them, and every time that we go hunting or anything like that, we always put out tobacco so it's respectful. (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 10, 2005)

Otaeciah explained the importance of respecting “them” (the spirits) through another cultural tradition, offering tobacco. Lemley saw community members consistently offer tobacco before cultural events like meetings, storytellings, and powwows. Menominee members explained to Lemley that this act of respect signified an offering to the spirit world. Similarly, Kanapaen, another learner, explained his Menominee identity through notions of respect:

the way I've been brought up was having respect for one another, respecting what they do. So that's how I've been brought up is if you give respect, you'll get respect from others. (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 18, 2004)

An integral part of Menominee culture is giving respect to each other, especially those older than you. In addition, Kanapaen pointed out a mutual benefit of giving and receiving respect. When Lemley gave tobacco to the learners to thank them for agreeing to interview, some of them looked at me in amazement and said, “*Maec waewaenen* (Menominee for “Thank you very much”). I've never received tobacco but only given it.” Lemley wondered if she'd been culturally inappropriate to offer tobacco to someone younger than she. She had asked the principals and teachers about the offering and they affirmed the practice. Some learners, however, may have been simply surprised to receive tobacco from a non-Indigenous person.

The Menominee revere communal versus individual accomplishments. Kanapaen's description of giving respect to receive respect demonstrates a commitment to mutual benefit. The Menominee history portrays stories of communal



efforts that enabled the Menominee community to persevere through intense and extensive hardships. Interviewees focused on the dynamic of communal benefit; they explained how respecting each other represented strength and a means of survival.

Like Kanapaen, Waepacewon (*kaeh nap* – an indication that the person has passed to the spirit world), an elder, described her identity from the respect she learned throughout her upbringing. Her mother taught her self-respect that resulted in self-pride. She shared these notions when she recalled a conference she had attended where the facilitator had asked her to respond to the question, “Who am I?”

“Who am I?” was the question. I had to sit and think and answer this question, “Who am I? What’s important to me as an individual?” And the first thing that came to my mind was: I’m Menominee Indian. That’s who I am, that’s what was important to me. So, I think it was the identification of self and the pride I had in myself as Menominee. And that’s how I was taught... “to be proud that you were Menominee even though your neighboring town looked down on you and discriminated against you and they were prejudiced because of who I am.” And so I was taught by my mother ... “to be proud to be an Indian and not to walk in with your head down. Hold your head up,” to be that kind of a person. (Menominee elder, personal interview, April 10, 2003)

This passage underscores Waepacewon’s (*kaeh-nap*) struggle and strong identification to Menominee identity from her younger years. Her generation experienced violent political acts such as forced assimilation through on-reservation and off-reservation boarding schools. Robbed of their Indigenous identity, this generation was expected to adopt the dominant white culture’s ways of speaking and acting. However, strong family relations taught the children to be proud of their Indigenous identity, as noted by another elder, Sāwanūhkiw (*kaeh nap*), who speaks of “good teaching.”

Being Menominee means, well I don’t know, being Indigenous I guess, so there is no way you’re gonna change that. I wouldn’t like to be no other kind of a person [laughs]. Like I said, like you always say, “You’re proud of what you are.” I’m proud of what, the way I was brought up. That’s good teaching. That’s the way I’d like, that’s the way I teach my children, grandchildren. To be good to one another, help each other, that’s what we did. Never fight each other, don’t make fun of anyone. We were taught that... (Menominee elder, personal interview, August 16, 2004)

These two elders shared memories of pride along with experiences in the give-and-take characterizing relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds. Remembering these stories and their own struggles growing up, the elders continued the tradition of teaching the younger generations to be proud to be

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Menominee. The next three narratives demonstrate a success of intergenerational transmission of pride in being Menominee. Mēcewan, a learner, represents her sense of Menominee identity by explaining her feelings when she went to pow-wow ceremonies on other reservations:

I'm proud to be Menominee and I'm proud to live on my reservation. Everywhere I go I tell people that I'm an Indian and I'm very proud of it and I'm very proud of my traditions. (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 18, 2004)

Mēcewan's pride in her Menominee identity extended beyond the limits of the reservation and even flourished in those spaces. Her sense of pride was rooted in a community identity of cultural traditions she practiced.

Mēquon, a speaker, explained how her self-pride included pride in Menominee land and history:

I really never really thought about being Menominee. It's just me and I'm proud of who I am. I'm proud of our land and our history and being Menominee. (Menominee speaker, personal interview, August 16, 2004)

Mēquon's switch from using the singular pronoun "I" to the plural pronoun "our" may signal a focus on community benefit. Mēquon's pride extended to Menominee land and Menominee history through her Menominee identity.

Sāwanōhsaeh, another speaker, explained a pride of Menominee history and land in more detail:

From a historical perspective, being Menominee is a source of pride. You're strongly identified with a cultural group with definite language and cultural and religious ceremonies, completely separate from mainstream America and that's a source of pride, you know. And we're struggling with our language but we're keeping it going the best we can... (Menominee speaker, personal interview, July 28, 2004)

Sāwanōhsaeh never used singular pronouns and instead described the reservation through plural perspectives. At first using "you" he almost distanced himself from the description and then changed to "we" and "our" to include himself in the explanation.

Waepacewon, an elder, expressed pride in her ability to speak Menominee fluently, and admitted the shame she felt that she did not embrace her Menominee identity during her adolescent years. Making knowledge of the language an integral part of "being Menominee," she described how she resisted engaging in the cultural practice of speaking Menominee in public in the following excerpt:

I'm very proud of my language. I remember, though, in the past when I was a very young girl, going to the store, the penny store [in a neighbor-

ing town]. I was with my mother who was shopping for some material, for sewing. Because of her age, she couldn't see very well, without her glasses, and so she was asking me, in Menominee, what was the price of that material, per yard. And I was ashamed to answer her in Menominee for what the price of that material was, so I said it to her in English. And, when I reflect back on what I had done, I'm very much ashamed that I had done that. I should have been more proud of my language at that time than I was, but I think one has to remember what were those days like... (Menominee elder, personal interview, March 27, 2002)

The pride of speaking Menominee now transcends the shame Waepacewon expressed for not embracing that part of her Menominee identity during her adolescent years. She had resisted engaging in the cultural practice of speaking Menominee in public, and she continually recounted "what those days were like" to teach and remind the younger generations how to resist and survive. She explained that she now teaches Menominee language to her relatives and adult learners through Menominee stories.

In speaking Menominee, practicing Menominee tradition, and remaining on the same land as their ancestors, the Menominee are living out what they say their ancestors encouraged: retaining Menominee culture, language and land. The history of the ancestors as well as their ability to maintain ownership of the land and preserve Menominee culture and language, even through great hardships, is something all of these language participants strive to continue. An emphasis on the importance of continuing to practice and pass on traditional ways was heard in all of the language participants' narratives.

The language participants identified Menominee pride transmitted through their participation in the MLRPs. The elders expressed pride through examples from their past to describe themselves and their actions today. They were even somewhat prescriptive at times, saying how things should be in order for the Menominee Nation and the MLRPs to succeed. The speakers pulled from perspectives of lived experiences and were proud of what the reservation represented and what they saw the community doing. They used different means to arrive at this conclusion than the elders did; yet the conclusions for both generations were the same. The learners emphasized that individual respect and pride interconnected with communal respect and pride. They identified respect and pride through cultural activities.

All three generations expressed pride in relation to activities indicating that pride transcends any differences that may exist and involves intergenerational transmission. Intergenerational transmission of knowledge is again identified in the next part, representation of language. We will explore how the language participants represented their language learning process to include language as a systemic means for communication as well as a culture carrier.

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### *Netāqtan netaeseqnaesewen (“I have my own language”)*

**Representation of language:** Menominee language participants explained how language learning meant more than learning to speak words. For example, some language participants described learning Menominee as listening to fluent speakers or hearing ancestral stories. The elders, however, did not always tell the stories in Menominee. While coding interviews, Lemley noted that the participants defined “language learning” as anything to do with Menominee history, traditions, land or language. Menominee language learning was more than learning language in and of itself; language also functioned as a means to access and practice cultural knowledge.

When Menominee organizations initiated MLRPs, Menominee language program directors invited elders who knew how to speak Menominee fluently to transmit Menominee language and culture to adult trainees. Some elders embraced this invitation. The elders often passed the language on through methods their parents and grandparents had modeled for them: storytelling and passing on commands and vocabulary used in the house.

The Menominee elders Lemley interviewed learned Menominee as a first language. Lemley asked the elders to tell her what they remembered about learning Menominee. Mānīh, an elder, pointed out how she learned Menominee as people learn any first language:

I mean my grandmother didn’t mean to teach me, I imagine. She just spoke Menominee and she often spoke broken, half Menominee, half English. So, naturally, I’m going to pick it up. (Menominee elder, personal interview, July 26, 2004).

Waepaewon, another elder, told a similar story describing how she learned Menominee from her mother:

at home she spoke a lot of Menominee, just little things saying what to do.... But to carry on a visiting conversation no, it was just “go get that,” “it’s over there,” “I put it over there,” “go see if you can find it,” and then if you find it, “bring it to me.” You know, those kinds of things. And “go pick that up” and “take it to someplace,” or “get the broom” and “go sweep steps off” and those kinds of things you know, work language. (Menominee elder, personal interview, July 2, 2004)

Waepaewon’s comments about the use of English during conversation suggests possible assimilative forces working to encourage Menominee to speak English and the tensions felt at home regarding what language to use. Waepaewon did not describe the learning process as Mānīh did “half English, half Menominee” but she did clearly explain that the Menominee language was not used to carry on entire conversations, implying that they used English to accomplish that. The elders all talked about how Menominee was used in a limited way, if at all, dur-

ing their school days. Home Menominee language use focused on commands, fixed phrases, and household items. Lemley observed similar foci in the training programs facilitated by the elders.

Mānīh, who had been raised by her grandparents, identified “listening and responding” as the Menominee language learning strategies she used when she was growing up:

Menominee was always there. I can hear my grandmother say [Menominee] “Go wash dishes now.” I suppose I’d try to get away without washing dishes [laughs] and little things like that [Menominee] which is, “Go get some water.” It’s just there, I can’t tell you how but because they spoke it and then they, they would tell stories at night in half Menominee I suppose, half English. (Menominee elder, personal interview, July 26, 2004)

Many of the language speakers shared this same language learning process: their parents and grandparents would use Menominee with the children for commands during the day and then the parents and grandparents would converse in complete sentences after the children went to bed. Sāwanōhsaeh, a speaker, also recounted memories of hearing his grandparents speak Menominee at night. The government relocated Sāwanōhsaeh’s family, and he lived the first eight years of his life in a neighboring state before returning to the reservation. He spent his summer vacations during his first eight years with his grandparents on the reservation. He described that experience this way:

And the best thing, I guess, was, you know, the swimming and summer activities, camping out things, fishing, hunting, but also hearing my grandparents speak the language. And the house they lived in was a long house. It was an old camp house, camp bunk house, so there was no room dividers, and all the beds were on one end of the room. And we’d go to sleep at night, and my grandparents would sit at the kitchen table, which was 25 feet away, and they’d turn on the kerosene lamp, and then they’d, then they’d talk Menominee, oh I’d say a good 30 minutes that they’d converse. At the time I didn’t know that much about what it was they were saying, but hearing that language as I was going to sleep was, it was beautiful. It was like, like music ‘cause the cadence that they used. And it was just wonderful. I wish I’d have heard more of that, but that was always my first impression about language, there, and I took it for granted. “So, they’re talking, they’re talking Indian” as they used to say, “They’re gonna talk Indian now.” And they wouldn’t speak during the daytime too much, just when the, everybody was in bed, and then they’d talk back and forth to each other. It was great... (Menominee speaker, personal interview, July 28, 2004)

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Relocation and societal pressures to assimilate to a dominant norm of speaking English would have inhibited Sāwanōhsaeh's generation from maximizing language learning practice from their fluent speaking relatives. Sāwanōhsaeh, however, acquired enough familiarity with language that formal language learning came easier for him later.

Likewise, Nowīs, another speaker, described an interest in Menominee language starting at a young age:

I had an interest in it when I was small because I could always, it was just, I always heard my grandparents, oh that's just grandma and grandpa talking, you know, 'cause they always talked Menominee when we'd visit them. . . . I could never distinguish words, it was always like one long word. I never really got an ear for it. . . . then when I was taking my teaching classes. . . . [I] took the Menominee language course as an elective 'cause it was available here and I had an aptitude for it. (Menominee speaker, personal interview, October 20, 2004)

As with Sāwanōhsaeh, Nowīs's exposure to the language at an early age may have influenced her ability for learning it later in life. These two speakers identified their grandparents' generation as the one that could speak Menominee fluently. Sāwanōhsaeh told me that the ancestors told him to preserve the Menominee culture, language and land; perhaps a similar experience explains why these speakers chose careers as Menominee language teachers: to take on the responsibility of continuing the intergenerational transmission of Menominee culture, language and land.

Mānīh, an elder, was raised by her grandparents because her mother died when she was three years old. She discussed the advantage this provided for her Menominee language skills: "My grandpa and grandma had it, it was just the three of us. The other grandchildren didn't get the Menominee like I did" (Menominee elder, personal interview, July 26, 2005). Kanapaen, a learner, shared a similar sentiment:

And I've just kind of been brought up with it 'cause my great grandpa spoke a lot around the house and stuff. And I just kind of was influenced by it and understood it a lot better 'cause it's been around, 'cause it's talking like almost every day he'd say something in Menominee and I'd catch on. So that's kind of how I got used to learning it. (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 18, 2004)

Kanapaen benefited from exposure to Menominee language through a fluent speaking relative. He started the language learning process with no formal expectations. This allowed him to develop a strong foundation to continue learning Menominee through school learning practices. Kanapaen described when he first remembered learning the language: I was "about 6 years old, not really learning [Menominee] but started catching on to like a few words, and kind of gradually

grown as I went along. I always did good when, when they had Menominee language class in school” (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 18, 2004). In contrast to the elders and speakers, Kanapaen used Menominee both at home and at school. In school, his abilities to understand and speak Menominee were validated and praised.

Naconiskowah Natānawehmakinak, a speaker, recalled a similar story of first learning the language through a family relation of the elders’ generation: [my great aunt “had a lot of old Indian stories that she used to share with us because she did speak Menominee to us, and I remember that” (Menominee speaker, personal interview, November 23, 2004).

Comparable to those language participants who had been exposed to Menominee language at a young age, Naconiskowah Natānawehmakinak’s familiarity with the sounds of the language may have been advantageous for her when she started hearing the language again in a formal language training program. She recalled learning stories that greatly helped her when she learned language deliberately in the training program:

I learned the most when [an elder] would tell me stories of how things came to be and I’d always remember that. I always remember, I think the first story she ever told me was back a long time ago when people used to ride horses that you know a lot of people didn’t have cars you know. And you would only go somewhere once a week because it took a long time.... (Menominee learner, personal interview, November 23, 2004)

No distinction was made between “language learning” when stories were told in English or Menominee. The cultural knowledge transmitted through the storytelling process was the “language learning” component. Fluent speakers intentionally taught Menominee culture, language and land through stories in both formal and informal language learning settings.

Mēcewan, a learner, also shared the importance of stories for her Menominee language learning process. Most learners did not grow up around fluent speakers and learned the language through language classes in school. Mēcewan said:

I really don’t remember anything from primary school Menominee language. Mostly in primary school we learned about numbers and the days of the week. Now that I’m in high school we’re learning about the stories and I really like that better, more than before. (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 18, 2004)

Mēcewan also explained that she had to see the language in order to remember it best. She explained she had to “keep the language in [her] head” in order to learn. This act, in turn, allowed her to remember what it looked like so that she could produce the sounds correctly. When Lemley observed her language classes, she did just that, looked at the words and then closed her eyes to concentrate on what it looked like in order to remember it.

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Kanapaen, the learner who grew up with a fluent speaking grandfather, described how he learned Menominee best:

It seems like well when I see and then it just kind of pitches in my head 'cause I get so, 'cause you're reading it for over and over and it gets stuck in your head and that's the way I learn it, gets stuck in your head and it's easier to, to understand it and learn it. (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 18, 2004)

A generational link for all language participants was made: those who lived with fluent speaking relatives learned the language most easily. These learners also seemed to have been exposed to more cultural knowledge than their peers. In this learning process, language skills in addition to broader cultural information encouraged the families to speak Menominee language as well as practice Menominee ways of knowing. Most elders, some speakers, and few learners grew up with fluent speaking Menominee relatives. Not all language participants were exposed to fluent speaking elders, so language skills and cultural knowledge varied greatly within and between the generations.

The school MLRPs ensured that younger generations did not need to rely on the chance of having a relative with language proficiency or cultural competence to learn Menominee language and culture. All language participants used the MLRPs to transmit and access knowledge. At times, the MLRPs initiated language and culture learning and, at other times, they supplemented initial learning; both were a means to “intentionalize” language learning opportunities in a formal setting: school.

In relation to Indigenous Discourses, Lemley describes MLRPs as a means to “intentionalize” language and culture transmission of the deliberate occurrence of the process to learn Menominee culture, language and land information. Intentional language and culture transmission ranged from regularly using commands at home to complete work chores to telling Menominee origin stories in English and/or Menominee. The intentional learning in informal settings and non-school ways seemed more desirable and attractive for the language participants and allowed them to invest profoundly in Menominee language learning both in and out of school.

The elders and other language participants felt the responsibility to pass language and cultural ways to future generations, a dynamic that we will address again in the authorship part of this section. The speakers initially promoted learning Menominee language indirectly (i.e., with no formal structure) through listening to fluent relatives or hearing stories. The stories, in fact, generated a desire in both speakers and learners to invest in the language learning process. The schools imprinted the language on the learners by providing language programs that allowed words and values to become “stuck in their heads.” Exploring Menominee culture and language transmission as a national culture building effort, we next present how language participants used the theme of Menominee land to describe themselves and their investment in the Menominee Nation.



*Netāqtamenaw netāhkemenaw* (“We have our own land”)

**Representation of land:** At the turn of the century, the Menominee Nation was widely recognized as one of the most successful logging operations in the US. The Menominee lost this recognition due to the devastating effects of the Menominee Termination Act of 1954. The language participants across the three generations recounted how the land directly and indirectly sustained them in similar and different ways, which signaled a historically conditioned intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Most elders recalled that the land directly sustained them economically, primarily through job opportunities related to the logging operation. Some speakers discussed pride in knowing the history of how the reservation land sustained their nation. Several learners described how they used the land and viewed the land as a communal possession.

Naconiskowah Natānawehmakinak, a speaker, emphasized the importance of living on the same land as her ancestors. She described Menominee identity as her connection to the reservation land. Specifically, she emphasized sustainable forestry, which had provided sustenance for past generations and sustains many Menominee today:

The big thing about being Menominee is that we found a way to use our land how it was supposed to be used, how our ancestors wanted us to use it, but at the same time, you know, we’re satisfying the needs for today. And it’s just amazing that whole process, sustainable forestry, . . . I guess that’s what’s really important to me, is just being a part of the reservation. I can say “Yes, I did what I could to be a part of our tribe, of our land, you know, of our people,” but even though under the circumstances that we are under now, I tried to do our best, and I think that’s really what is important is just doing what you can to contribute. I think that’s a big part of it, being an Indian, being a Menominee Indian. (Menominee speaker, November 23, 2004)

Ketākāhsaehkiw, a learner, offered a more abstract representation of how the land connected to her identity: “Being Menominee is like being in touch with nature and like your surroundings, I guess. Your original surroundings, something like that” (Menominee learner, May 18, 2004). Ketākāhsaehkiw, like other language participants, had at first struggled to identify what being Menominee meant to her. After deliberation, however, she, like many other language participants, described being Menominee as being connected to the land and, in particular, to sustainable forestry. Language participants further described Menominee identity in relation to a communal identity involving actions of respect. The land aspect of Ketākāhsaehkiw’s response, particularly her reference to “your original surroundings,” was interesting to note because so many language participants have moved on and off the reservation, including herself. The land holds great importance. She added that her identity also

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included stories her grandmother would tell about cultural traditions of dancing and the symbolic meaning of the feather.

Mānīh, an elder, similar to other elders, described growing up Menominee in relation to her school life and work. She went to Kansas for boarding school to complete her high school degree. She returned to the reservation and looked for her first job:

Went to Kansas, then I came home and I worked. There used to be a job on the reservation called a “gooseberry berry pick.” We had to get the gooseberries out from the woods because it caused blister rust on the white pines. So we’d walk in lines through the woods, run a string line, and pick every skunk root or gooseberry root we found, we had to pull them out, because it caused blister rust... on the pines and that’s one of our main sources of income here at those times. (Menominee elder, personal interview, July 26, 2004)

Mānīh explained that finding long-term work on the reservation for a woman was impossible without secretarial skills. The reservation logging business was the tribe’s “main source of income” at that time and provided a job for her for the short term, but she soon left the reservation because the job ended with the changing of the seasons.

Sōsaeh, another elder, recounted his first job and second life-long job, which were both connected to the land and, more specifically, the logging operation:

My first job was in the woods... fixing roads, logging roads, and then I went on loading the truck. That was a good job, it was dangerous, but it was a good job... Springtime..., the roads get too soft you can’t log, so they had that shut down there. My dad... worked in the lumberyard and... he told me... where he works there was another place open. I went down there, and... got that job there. And I was there for the next forty years. (Menominee elder, personal interview, October 18, 2004)

Sāwanōhsaeh, a speaker, underscored a sense of pride emanating from a historical perspective of Menominee ancestors having walked on the same land he walks today:

Being Menominee is a source of pride... to really have secure roots and where you come from and to realize that all of our ancestors lived on this land, walked this land for in excess of 20,000 years... (Menominee speaker, personal interview, July 28, 2004)

The land did not provide jobs for his generation like it had for the elders, but elders, speakers and learners nonetheless share communal Menominee pride in their land and resources.

Otaeciah, a fourth-grade tribal school learner, shared Naconiskowah Natānawehmakinak's desire to carry on Menominee culture through practicing ancestral traditional ways and passing this knowledge on to the community. To him, growing up on the reservation involved Menominee traditions:

Well it's real good, the people mostly, they try to teach the way to do Indian stuff. Like my dad, he always has us do stuff like Indians would. He'll make spears for people and then he knows how to do stuff, how Indians used to do it and everything like that, so you do stuff that Indians would do a long time ago. (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 10, 2004)

Awaehsaeh Anakwat, another learner, also described being Menominee as involving activities: "Being Menominee is being...[able to]...hunt and fish... being free to do things you can't do in the city" (Menominee learner, personal interview, May 10, 2004). He explained that rules are different on the reservation than in the city and felt more liberated on the reservation. The sovereign status of the tribe that enables tribal members to hunt, fish, and gather juxtaposes with different stipulations enforced "in the city." Other learners described more concrete ways of using the land, like swimming in the river. The sustenance of the land for the elders and the speakers seemed to translate into a sense of freedom for the learners.

For many generations, the Menominee reservation land has provided sustenance for the Menominee Nation. Acknowledging this sustenance, each generational group felt responsibility to the land in different ways. The elders remembered the land as a source of income. Labor had a larger social purpose, one of survival. In contrast, the speakers did not refer to the land so much in economic terms, but knowing the land had provided sustenance for their ancestors instilled pride and made them feel an obligation to preceding and proceeding generations. The learners talked about traditions related to the land, referencing the historical underpinnings of understanding the importance of land resources. The learners also mentioned ancestral ways and their own connections to the Menominee reservation land as part of Menominee identity.

The MLRPs are one way to transmit a belief system that empowers the language participants to express their pride and commitment to Menominee identity. Lemley interviewed each participant separately, yet their responses often reflected how multiple other people influenced their knowledge, values and beliefs. Similarly, Holland et al. (1998) write, "In the figured world of dialogism the vantage point rests within the 'I' and authoring comes from the 'I,' but the words come from collective experience" (p. 171). The language participants expressed external influences affecting their responses and thoughts about the MLRPs.

### **Findings and discussion**

Lemley utilized narrative inquiry as a methodology in order to better understand the MLRPs and how they affected the Menominee language participants,

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i.e., represented part of their human experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Mutua & Swadener, 2004). Listening to the language participant narratives, Lemley heard many language participants equate loss of language with loss of Spirit. Their narratives suggested that the Menominee language represented an integral part of recovering their identity in order to reclaim voice to speak for and by themselves as well as act for themselves (Deloria, 1995; Durie, 1997; Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 1994).

The language participant narratives further suggested that the language participants identified the MLRPs as a conduit for language and culture reclamation. Through learning to speak Menominee, the language participants shared how they gained self-understanding that promoted both the resistance of hegemonic norms and the discovery of ways to sustain their Menominee identity. The language participants also focused on maintenance of Menominee culture, language and land, as well as a belief that this process could and should occur for all Menominee members. The language participants underscored the importance of maintaining the Menominee language by linking it to Menominee cultural traditions and ceremonial events. In addition, all language participants emphasized the benefits and effectiveness of learning Menominee language through storytelling.

Narrative inquiry provided a method in which the voices of the language participants remained central to the study. Indigenous Discourses, a term expanded from Ngugi's (1993, 1994) discussion of language as communication as well as culture carrier, and Gee's (1996, 1999) discussion of Discourses as ways of knowing through language and non-language communication, extended the notion of voice into Indigenous ways of knowing. Naming and using Indigenous Discourses as an analytic tool, the stories of the language participants' involvement with MLRPs presented a collective story of what it means to speak, teach, and learn the Menominee language. Learning the language to communicate as well as transmit cultural knowledge gave way to compelling evidence that the MLRPs are influencing the identity and sustainability of the language programs in positive ways.

Similarities and differences emerged in and among the narratives of each generation. The narratives of the elders and the speakers suggested the need for increased community involvement in the MLRPs. The language programs, primarily accessible in the schools, appear to give some people the sense of security that the language is no longer at risk of being lost. The narratives of all language participants, however, suggested that the knowledge must be continually transmitted, presented in different forms at varying sites in order to maximize language and culture sustainability.

Discourses are ways of being, knowing, acting and valuing. We used Indigenous Discourses to explore how the language participants described the MLRPs as identity reclamation and the promotion of Menominee ways of knowing as a means of initiating change to recover language and reclaim voice. Education for and by Indigenous peoples provides a means for Indigenous people to unlock the power they possess and then use it to self-determine and resist a schooling structure that often devalues their knowledge base. Wilson (2004) writes, "Rec-

lamation of Indigenous knowing is more than resistance to colonial domination, it is also a signifier of cultural revitalization and mounting Native nationalism” (p. 84). The narratives from this paper suggest that the MLRPs have the potential to recover Menominee language and reclaim a Menominee voice.

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