

Chapter in: A. Yiakoumetti (Ed.). *Multilingualism and language in education: Current sociolinguistic and pedagogical perspectives from Commonwealth countries*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Trouble on the Frontier: The Perils of Persisting Colonial Language Policies in Canada

Jessica Ball, University of Victoria

Introduction

“*White Canada Forever*” was one of the most popular ballads sung at family picnics and in beer parlours in Canadian towns and cities in the early 1900s (Kazimi, 2004). The song epitomized the belief in white – and especially British – supremacy in the decades following confederation. The song flourished soon after the federal government declared English and French as the two “founding” languages and imposed colonial language policy upon what remained of the Indigenous populations after attempts to eliminate them altogether had failed. The same exclusionary policy extended as well to newcomers to Canada who were not English or French. This history of overt white settler privilege continues to inflect the present in ways that may be less brazen, but are nevertheless abundantly consequential, especially in schools.

As a country comprised of Indigenous Peoples and immigrants from all over the world, Canada is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the Commonwealth with over 200 languages reported in the 2011 Census of the Population as a home language or mother tongue. One-fifth of the population (6.8 million people) has a mother tongue other than English or French, and 17.5% of Canadians (5.8 million people) speak at least two languages at home (Statistics Canada, 2012). Canadian children come to school with a precious resource – their home languages. As in many Commonwealth countries, most Canadian public schools neglect and effectively stamp out children’s facility with their home language(s), while privileged languages are marketed to children and parents as normative, desired, high status, and required for success in school. This chapter underscores how much more could be done to encourage and actively support inter-

generational transmission of language diversity, and especially endangered Indigenous languages, by ensuring that public education does not have a subtractive effect on children's multilingual acquisition and on the country's linguistic diversity (Wright, Taylor, & MacArthur, 2000).

While struggling to achieve decolonization by degrees, Canada - like many Commonwealth countries - remains deeply colonial in many of its federal, provincial and territorial policies, societal attitudes, and institutional practices. The education sector is no exception. The discussion which follows highlights the potential of mother-tongue based multilingual education for honouring commitments to equality and respect for cultural rights, diversity, and supporting the active contributions that young people can make to society, set out in the Commonwealth Charter (The Commonwealth, 2012). It explores some promising developments in Indigenous language teaching and the potential for shifts in provincial and territorial positions regarding language diversity in schools to advance a post-colonial agenda and the goals of Education for All.

Tongue-tied in Canada's colonial language landscape

This section focuses specifically on Indigenous languages in Canada, including an examination of the colonial policies that have hastened their demise. It sets a context for understanding the current need for changes in policy and practice to uphold the rights enshrined in various aspirational documents to which Canada is a party, including the Commonwealth Charter, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Canada's self-construction: Glorious and free. Canada suffers from an aggrandizing self-construction as a nation built on civility and a beacon of multiculturalism. Becoming signatory to the Commonwealth Charter reinforced belief in Canada's global moral leadership. Images of Canada reflect its expansive natural resources and beauty: huge mountain ranges, glaciers, prairie grasslands, forests, coastlines and permanently frozen tundra in the 'Great White North. But Canada does not treasure in equal measure its equally expansive yet intangible cultural resources, especially the vast repository of languages among Indigenous Peoples and the population of immigrants from all over the globe. About 20% of Canadian children start school with a language other than the medium of instruction. Within weeks of starting school, they are asked to transition

to learning in one or both colonial languages: English or French. Only in rare instances are children supported in school to develop their proficiency in the language(s) they were acquiring up to the point of school entry. This situation is particularly consequential for Indigenous languages, which have been devastated over centuries of colonial interventions and which are now on the brink of extinction. Canada is home to 11 Indigenous language families and 86 different Indigenous languages (Moseley, 2010), reflecting a diversity of histories, cultures and identities and linked to family, community, the land, and traditional knowledge. As a result of government language planning and policies that have actively opposed or neglected these languages, all of these are at risk of extinction within this century, except perhaps Nîhîyaw (Cree), Anishnaabe (Ojibway), and Inuttitut (Inuit) (Norris, 2006).

Over the past several centuries, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have experienced a succession of colonial government interventions, including genocide, forced relocation of villages, appropriation of land, prohibition of Indigenous economic, social, political, cultural and spiritual systems and enforced enrolment of children in Indian residential schools. The Indian residential schools dealt an especially devastating blow to the capacity of Indigenous families to transmit their languages and cultures across generations and to the subsequent engagement of Indigenous children and parents in the public education system. Recognizing that language is the primary vehicle for sustaining identity, community, culture, and lifestyle, the newly consolidated federal government anticipated that if Indigenous children were prevented from speaking their mother tongue, their cultures would likely die out (Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999). Thus, from 1879 to 1996, Indigenous children in Canada were legislated to attend Indian residential schools; parents who did not comply were incarcerated (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). Children were required to speak only English or French. As Crystal (1997) describes, language death occurs when one group is colonized and assimilated by another and adopts its language, either forcibly or by choice. Increasingly, Indigenous children cannot communicate in an Indigenous language with their grandparents and have lost access to the cultural knowledges carried by their ancestral language. One result of this process of conquest and assimilation has been the development of an official national culture that does not recognize Indigenous Peoples as founding nations much less as sovereign nations, and does not recognize any of the Indigenous languages as ‘founding’

languages, as if they did not exist at the time of confederation or during the millennia before contact. Within the education sector, Indigenous languages are not seen as languages of learning.

At the time of confederacy in 1867, policies supported by legislation and funding established Canada as English and French (Gourd, 2007). In 1963, political tensions surrounding the comparative status of French and English led a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism to recommend an Official Languages Act. Enacted in 1969, English and French were secured as the official state languages. Despite efforts to have their languages recognized, Indigenous Peoples and their languages were rendered invisible. The Commission affirmed Canada's responsibility to do "everything that is possible to help the native populations preserve their cultural heritage" (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1967, Vol 1: xxv) but did not specifically identify preservation of languages or recommend state responsibility for language maintenance. This policy of exclusion prevails in Canada today.

Although this chapter focuses on Indigenous language-in-education in relation to the Commonwealth project, it should be noted that white privilege and the privileging of English and French have negatively affected newcomers to Canada as well, especially those of non-European descent, including many from other Commonwealth countries. Consistent with the exclusivity expressed by the lyrics of *White Canada Forever*, various historic and contemporary policies have been designed to keep racialized 'others' and their non-colonial languages out of Canada. Examples include the Canadian Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923, elements of which persisted until 1967, the Continuous Passage Act from 1908-1947, designed to prevent non-European immigrants from other British colonies, especially a perceived 'Hindu invasion', and the similar, present-day Safe Third Country Agreement, enacted in 2004, designed to keep out refugee claimants who have passed through another potentially safe country en route to Canada.

Alongside its tenacity in pursuing the colonial agenda, the Canadian government has also been a global leader in the culture of apology (Mackey, 2013). For example, in recent years, the federal government has issued apologies to Chinese Canadians for head tax policies from 1885 to 1947 and the Chinese Exclusion Act (Office of the Prime Minister, 2006), to Japanese Canadians for their forced evacuation, resettlement, and confiscation of property from 1939 to 1949

(CBC Digital Archives, n.d.), and most recently, to Indigenous Peoples for a century of forced confinement of Indigenous children in Residential Schools (Office of the Prime Minister, 2008). The latter apology did not encompass all of the colonial incursions that undermined Indigenous sovereignty, cultural integrity, and the health of Indigenous people and languages. It situated the damage done to Indigenous Peoples within a particular colonial intervention (the Residential Schools) over a particular period of time, escaping reflection on the pervasive destructiveness of a host of colonial policies and how the legacies of this destruction remain enmeshed in economic and social policies, institutional practices including schooling, front line services including teaching, and social attitudes within Canadian society. After the apology, nothing much changed. In fact, federal funding was discontinued for many Indigenous initiatives, including the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, the National Aboriginal Health Organization, and the Network Environment Aboriginal Health Research Centres. A year after the apology, Canadian Prime Minister and apologist Harper remarked at a G20 meeting that Canada has “no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers, but none of the things that threaten or bother them about the great powers” (Ljunggren, 2009). Clearly, the colonial past is not yet over - as the government and many Canadians would like to imagine or as the signing of the Commonwealth Charter would seem to imply. Many Indigenous people continue to experience colonial injustices, not as a century-old history, but as a condition that continues to affect their lives today. Lack of support for Indigenous languages in early childhood education, schools and post-secondary education is one of these conditions.

Upholding the Commonwealth Charter through language-in-education reforms

International aspirations such as those set out in the Commonwealth Charter, as well as commitments to the Millennium Development Goals and an anticipated new development framework¹, are hollow without support for linguistic diversity through education. In addition to the Commonwealth Charter, Canada has been party to innumerable universal declarations, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations

¹ United Nations (n.d.). Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which enshrines the right of parents to transmit their culture to their children and to have their children learn in their home language. Language is the means by which people define their identity and claim their distinctiveness, and language shapes and communicates one's perception of reality. The loss of a language in the world, or the loss of an emerging capacity to think in a particular language, results in the loss of a distinctive cognitive perspective and means of accessing cultural knowledge contained within the language. Language-in-education policies and multilingual pedagogies are the most promising tools for sustaining non-dominant languages and for promoting the success, and in some cases the cultural survival, of Indigenous and other ethnolinguistic minority populations (Mohanty, Panda, Phillipson, & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009). Language-in-education policies and public investments must address the historically created needs of Indigenous Peoples to increase the number of Indigenous language speakers and honour the right of Indigenous children to be educated in their language, with culturally meaningful teaching and curricula, cultural safety, and dignity.

Advocacy for language rights in education. Since the 1970's in Canada, Indigenous rights activists, parents, linguistic scholars, and child development specialists have emphasized the loss of identity, cultural knowledge, personal well-being and social belonging that accompanies and is arguably caused by language-in-education policies that deny children the right to learn in their mother tongue. A prominent Indigenous early education organization in British Columbia has encouraged a view of language not only as a primary medium of instruction, but also as "the life blood of a people, carrying the spirit of the past to the children of the present / La langue est l'âme d'un peuple, transmettant l'esprit du passé aux enfants du présent" (Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia, 2011). The federal office for Canadian Heritage (Government of Canada, 2014) as well as national Indigenous organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations (2000) has recommended policies and funding programs for sustaining Indigenous languages through education.

Concurrently, many other linguistic groups in Canada are becoming vocal about the need to ensure transmission of their linguistic heritage to the youngest members of their communities through the school system. For example, veterans of the Bangladesh War of Independence who

are now Canadian citizens have formed an advocacy group called Mother Language Lovers of the World. Recognizing from their own experiences in a war fought in large measure for the right of Bengali-speaking people to have their children taught in their mother tongue rather than in the privileged language of their oppressors, these advocates successfully petitioned UNESCO to establish International Mother Language Day, celebrated annually on February 21, coinciding with the day of the language martyrs' victory in Bangladesh. They are now advocating for policy reforms and investments in Canada to provide Indigenous and ethnolinguistic minority children with opportunities to become proficient in their mother tongues through publically funded learning programs both in school and in school-based after-hours programs.

The manufacture of marginalization through language-in-education policies. It is not hard to grasp all that is at stake when parents and children have to face schooling in a language they do not understand or use at home. In mainstream schools, language of instruction and teaching practices often contribute to the marginalization of children whose mother tongue is not the privileged language. Parents may not enrol their children in school at all: UNESCO (2014) estimates 58 million children aged 6 to 11 around the world who are never enrolled in school, most of whom are Indigenous children and girls in small ethnolinguistic minority communities. Exemplifying this trend in Canada, 35% of Innu children in Labrador reportedly never enrol in school, a trend that is partly due to having to 'sink or swim' in an alien culture and language of instruction in public schools (Philpott, 2004). Parents may enrol their children but not insist upon regular attendance. Children who attend school may not be fully engaged, fail out of early grades, or continue through primary school without learning to read in the language of instruction. Teachers may feel overwhelmed by children's initial difficulties understanding or participating, contributing to teacher burn-out and leaving the profession. Parents may have no way to communicate in writing or conversation with teachers. As well, many children, especially in rural and remote communities, may speak a non-standard variant of English that creates communication difficulties for children, their teachers, and peers (Ball & Bernhardt, 2012). In particular, the pragmatics of communication in some Indigenous families and communities may be at odds with the participation and expectations of teachers, other parents, and children in institutions of the dominant culture, including public schools. All of these scenarios can produce

lowered self-esteem, cultural identity confusion and conflict, difficulties for parents wanting to support their children's learning, and lack of engagement in formal education. In Canada, the situation raises serious doubts about whether public schools are willing to support the educational success, linguistic rights, and social inclusion, of Indigenous and ethnolinguistic minority children (Ball, 2009; Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

If ethnolinguistic minority children do succeed, perhaps through a language transition program that helps them to acquire the language of instruction, there is the risk of subtractive effects of schooling whereby children fail to become linguistically competent members of their families and communities and lose the ability to access their cultural heritage. Some education systems even encourage parents to use the language of instruction in school at home, so that children can be more 'school ready.' Many school readiness and early learning assessment tools assume that a child is learning only one language and is supposed to be learning the language of instruction, especially if they are in publically funded preschool or kindergarten (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani & Merali, 2006). Ethnolinguistic minority children may be seen as working against a handicap and standardized assessment tools in the dominant language often 'prove' that language minority children are delayed or even have language or learning disorders (Ball & Lewis, 2011; Peltier, 2009; Sterzuk, 2008). Rather than persisting with the assimilationist approach to education, it is reasonable to ask what is being done to make schools – and the teachers and learning resources within schools - more ready for children.

A basic Canadian value is that, wherever children live and irrespective of their ethnicity or home language, programs for promoting their optimal development should be accessible and linguistically and culturally appropriate (Canadian Centre for Justice, 2001). Yet, Indigenous histories, cultures, and languages have been largely excluded from public school pedagogy and curricula in Canada (Battiste, 2013). These exclusions perpetuate racist attitudes and inaccurate perceptions in Canadian society that can in turn promote discrimination and social exclusion. Persistent gaps in numbers of years in formal education and academic achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2011) are likely attributable, in part,

to language-in-education policies that disregard, actively disparage, or even pathologize the language or dialect with which children enter formal schooling (Ball, 2012a).

Mother tongue-based multilingual education as a strategy to promote equity and dignity for all

Accumulated evidence shows that children's first language is the optimal language for literacy and learning throughout primary school (UNESCO, 2008a), and as a prelude to or complement of bilingual and multilingual education. UNESCO (1953; 2003) has encouraged mother tongue instruction in primary education for more than half a century. Advantages of mother tongue based multilingual education right from the start are well documented. For example, children are more likely to enrol and succeed in school (Kosonen, 2005); parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning (Benson, 2002); and girls and rural children with less exposure to a dominant language stay in school longer and repeat grades less often (Hovens, 2002; UNESCO Bangkok, 2005). Further, research shows that children's ability to learn a second or additional languages (e.g., a *lingua franca* and an international language) does not suffer when their mother tongue is the primary language of instruction throughout primary school: fluency and literacy in the mother tongue lay a cognitive and linguistic foundation for learning additional languages (Cummins, 1979; Verhoeven, 1994). When children receive formal instruction in their first language throughout primary school and then gradually transition to academic learning in the second language, they learn the second language quickly, and they develop certain types of cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness earlier and better than their monolingual peers (e.g., Bialystok, 2001; Francis, Lesaux & August, 2006; King & Mackey, 2007).

Conditions for success. Effective mother-tongue based multilingual education depends on the interaction of a number of direct inputs, chiefly quality, continuity, and enabling conditions (Ball, 2011; UNESCO, 2008a). Enabling conditions include parent demand and political will. Insufficiencies in these chief contributing factors can lead to inconsistent and sub-optimal outcomes that undermine learner success, parents' expectations, teacher satisfaction, and the strength of a language. Ineffective practice also provides fertile ground for critics to reinscribe a litany of 'impossibilizing' arguments about why mother-tongue based multilingual education

won't work in a particular country or community (Krashen, 1999). An example of this type of 'impossibilizing' discourse is the ill-informed but well-intentioned assertion that children educated in a minority language will be unable to participate in the labour force. It must be emphasized that mother tongue-based multilingual education does not restrict children to learning *only* their mother tongue, which may be a minority language. Rather, in this model, children are supported throughout primary school to become fully literate in their first language while studying a majority language as a subject, and then transition in secondary school to instruction in the majority language for content subjects, thereby becoming bi- or multi-lingual and fully ready to participate in civil society and the labour market.

There is a growing literature describing circumstances, resources and models that are working successfully to engage marginalized children in school through mother tongue-based, multilingual education (MTB-MLE) (e.g., Benson & Kosonen, 2013; Yiakoumetti, 2012). A compendium of examples produced by UNESCO (2008b) and collected case studies of mother tongue-based multilingual education (e.g., Benson & Kosonen, 2013; Mohanty et al., 2009; Yiakoumetti, 2012) attest to the growth of demand for mother tongue-based, multilingual education in ethnolinguistic minority communities and to the wide variety of models, tools, and resources now being developed and piloted to promote learning programs in the mother tongue. This literature is beginning to answer questions such as: Under what circumstances and with what resources can MTB-MLE be an effective, additive approach whereby children become proficient in their home language while laying the foundation for learning in additional languages? What are the costs and benefits of alternative approaches in varying situations and at different levels, from the individual to the family, community, school, region, and nation? What are meaningful yet efficient ways to measure costs and benefits? What are the implications of MTB-MLE for recruiting, educating, and mentoring teachers and teacher assistants and for creating and evaluating curricula in diverse language classrooms? What are the contributions of family and community in formal and non-formal MTB-MLE, and how can these be measured?

Quality. Learning outcomes of all kinds depend upon the match between the child's needs and what school has to offer, the quality of the teaching and learning environment, and

home support. Providing schooling in a language that children and parents can understand is a first step, but quality matters. A key ingredient is opportunities for learners to interact with fully proficient speakers and writers of the language of instruction. This requirement has implications for recruiting teachers - or community members working in para-professional roles alongside teachers - who are proficient in the language(s) spoken by particular groups of students. Steps must be taken to ensure that teachers with particular language capacities are assigned to regions or groups of students who speak those languages. Steps may include upgrading teachers' proficiency in the minority language of instruction, as is currently being done in the Philippines to support a sweeping new language-in-education reform that provides mother tongue based education throughout that highly linguistically diverse nation. Teaching training and ongoing mentoring must forge attitudes and skills that support practice with linguistically diverse groups of children, sometimes within the same school. Investments are needed to produce quality learning resources that provide children with opportunities to interact with developmentally appropriate, meaningful learning materials, particular literacy materials, in their primary language. In some settings, resource development must extend to orthographic development or modernization of a language to encompass current knowledge, for example, in science and technology.

Early is better. Opportunities for early learning in the mother tongue promotes children's positive identity as learners and can begin to get children and their parents interested in formal schooling, especially if children are able to transition smoothly to primary school in their mother tongue. Early childhood education can begin to establish literacy and numeracy in the mother tongue, open doors to active involvement of parents and grandparents, and reinforce positive cultural identity, which in turn promotes wellness and the likelihood of a successful transition to school.

Continuity. While early is good, continuity is most important. Studies show that six to eight years of education in a language are necessary to develop the level of literacy and verbal proficiency required for academic achievement in secondary school; that is, until children not only can read proficiently, but are successfully reading to learn (Cummins, 1979). To retain and

develop proficiency in their mother tongue, children whose first language is not the medium of instruction must have: (1) ongoing formal instruction in their first language to develop reading and writing skills; and (2) continued interaction in their first language with people outside of the school environment, such as their family members, about increasingly complex topics that go beyond household matters. If learners have opportunities to continue to develop their first language skills in secondary school, they can become fully bilingual (or multilingual) learners. If, however, children are forced to switch abruptly or transition too soon from learning in their mother tongue to schooling in a second language (i.e., 'early exit'), their first language acquisition may be attenuated or even lost (Benson, 2002). Even more importantly, their self-confidence as learners and their interest in what they are learning may decline, leading to lack of motivation, school failure, and early school leaving (Bougie, Wright, & Taylor, 2003).

Emerging strategies in Canada to support Indigenous languages in education

While there is variation across Indigenous families and communities in Canada, there is an overall burgeoning of interest among parents for their children to learn an Indigenous language within or outside of formal schooling (Norris, 2006; Canadian Heritage, 2005). Meanwhile, federal resources to provide mother tongue-based immersion, bilingual, or multilingual education are growing at glacial speed. The federal government supports the Aboriginal Languages Initiative with about \$5 million annually to be divided equally among provinces and territories. The federal government also supports early childhood programs, described subsequently. The Aboriginal Languages of Canada Act (Senate of Canada, 2009) continues an earlier national policy allowing for local control of education of First Nation children who attend schools on reserves. The Act recommends that land-based Indigenous communities create local by-laws to declare languages as "official" within their particular community. Hence, children may access education in an Indigenous language *if* they live on a reserve, *if* the reserve operates a school, and *if* that school has the community mandate and resources to offer education in the Indigenous language. Although rare, there are a few schools that are able to provide this kind of education. The Act falls short of calling for legislative action to support public education in Indigenous languages. To date, there has been almost no empirical research assessing the overall effectiveness or effective

components of Indigenous language-in-education pilot projects (Charron, 2010). Scattered attempts in communities or in the education sector to include some opportunity to learn Indigenous languages or learn through an Indigenous language as a medium of instruction are described below.

Early childhood programs. Because government policies of linguistic assimilation enforced in public schools present an almost overwhelming obstacle to supporting children's Indigenous language acquisition, most progress has been made through community-operated programs for young children, including language nests for infants and toddlers and immersion or bilingual preschools. Community members are uniquely positioned to identify core features of language socialization, to understand the contexts of child development and care in the community, and to offer insights to teachers about the conditions, needs, and goals of a family or community. One of the bright lights in an otherwise gloomy landscape for Indigenous languages in education is ongoing federal government support for Aboriginal Head Start (about \$40 million for urban and northern programs and about \$50 million for land-based or on-reserve programs). This is a culturally based, community-operated, school readiness preschool program (Ball, 2012b). The program provides scope for communities to support children to learn an Indigenous language if there is parent demand and a proficient speaker willing to teach. However, there is no training or annualized source of funding for practitioners in Aboriginal Head Start to learn how to teach Indigenous languages, address the needs of multilingual groups of children, or create effective mother tongue based or multilingual learning resources. Perhaps as a result of these shortcomings, a majority of programs do not provide Indigenous-language-medium programming or intensive Indigenous language acquisition programming. About 15% of Indigenous children under 6 years old are able to find a place in Aboriginal Head Start.

Language immersion. Several Indigenous language immersion primary schools exist in Canada, including: Eskasoni school in Nova Scotia, Waskaganish schools in Quebec, and Chief Ahtam School in British Columbia (Fulford, 2007). Research and reports of other groups internationally point to immersion as the most promising approach to language acquisition in

skip-generation contexts, where children's parents do not speak the heritage language (Aguilera & LeCompte, 2007; Hinton & Hale, 2001).

Bilingual education. A handful of schools funded by the federal government but controlled by Indigenous communities offer bilingual schooling. For example, there are several Cree-English-French schools operated by the Cree School Board in James Bay Quebec,² and a school in Manitoba offering Kindergarten to Grade 12 in Cree and English. Fourteen lower primary schools in Nunavik offer English-Inuktitut (Louis & Taylor, 2001). A study of students in these schools found positive outcomes on personal and collective self-esteem (Taylor & Wright, 2003). The Mohawk community in Kahnawà:ke, Quebec, started a bilingual school in 1982 that has moved increasingly towards an immersion approach extending from preschool through Grade 12. Early studies found that, compared to students in English-only primary education, primary grade students in Mohawk immersion developed their proficiency in Mohawk, spoke Mohawk more often outside the classroom, scored equally well on tests of English acquisition and academic content knowledge (Hoover, 1992).

Indigenous language as an elective subject. A growing number of schools in Canada with a high enrolment of Indigenous students now teach an Indigenous language as an elective subject of study. Typically a proficient speaker of the language speaker is recruited locally to teach students (including non-Indigenous students). In British Columbia, the Ministry of Education allows school districts to create curriculum for learning languages other than English or French and offer it as a second language from Primary 5 through 12.³ However, research shows that studying a language as a subject does not support proficiency in the language unless learners have opportunities to hear and interact in the language outside the language learning classroom, such as in content courses and in a community of speakers (Hinton & Hale, 2001).

Analyses of data from an Aboriginal People's Survey conducted by Statistics Canada found that, for Indigenous children, learning an Indigenous language in school (through immersion, bilingual schooling, or as a subject of study) was associated with positive school outcomes

² Cree School Board: <https://www.cscree.qc.ca/index.php/schools/wabannutao-eeyou-school>

³ For more information, visit the Ministry of Education's provincial language template application site at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/template_developed.php

(Guevremont & Kohen, 2009). Although the parent-report data for this study is weak, this is the only attempt to date to assess the link between school-based Indigenous language learning opportunities and education outcomes.

English as a second dialect. In a study that gathered the perceptions of 70 speech-language therapists who work with Indigenous children referred for apparent language delays or disorders, nearly all therapists reported three or more unique features of Indigenous children's English. These included phonological, syntactic, and pragmatic features that appear to constitute distinctive English dialects (Ball & Lewis, 2011), rather than indicators of language deficits as most of the referring teachers surmised. Exploratory studies have documented what is known about Indigenous English dialects in Canada through linguistic research and applied practice (Ball & Bernhardt, 2012; Sterzuk, 2010). Until recently, the only significant work on English as a second dialect (ESD) was done in Australia, where school-based programs help Indigenous children and their parents to value their home language as a legitimate form of English, while also learning to 'code switch' from their dialect to the variety of English used in school (Simpson and Wigglesworth, 2008). The potential of the ESD concept and ESD funding to evolve a strengths-based, culturally appropriate pedagogy to support Indigenous children's language and literacy is emerging as a topic of considerable interest among educators and speech-language pathologists in Canada (Ball & Bernhardt, 2012). British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario recently introduced policies and funding to support school-based ESD programs. The only known study of outcomes found that Indigenous children in British Columbia who participated in an ESD program performed better than other Indigenous children and non-Indigenous children in a fourth grade test of basic skills (Battisti, Friesen, & Krauth, 2014).

Strengthening teacher capacity. Indigenous language teacher training programs have been instituted in a few postsecondary institutions in Canada. For example, in 1999, the First Nations Education Steering Committee forged a partnership with the British Columbia College of Teachers to create an accredited Developmental Standard Teaching Certificate (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2001). The program enabled First Nation communities to partner with a postsecondary institution to offer community-based teacher training focused on

Indigenous language revitalization. The University of Victoria partnered with an Indigenous education centre to co-create a university-accredited Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization,⁴ which now ladders into a diploma and a baccalaureate teaching degree.⁵ The University of Alberta annually delivers a Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute to strengthen Indigenous language teaching capacity.

Troubling trends. While parent demand for diverse languages of instruction is becoming more audible in Canada, many educators counter that, for Indigenous learners, introducing Indigenous language learning is an added risk factor that could contribute to persisting low rates of Indigenous students' academic success. As has been discussed, quality and continuity of language learning support are critical to the success of children learning in their mother tongue, whether this is a first language or a language that has skipped a generation. If children are learning in a bilingual model, with an expectation that they will learn in their mother tongue but also begin to develop familiarity with a dominant language, this takes time. Children will not develop proficiency through preschool immersion programs only, or through an afterschool language club: they require ongoing, quality instruction in their mother tongue well beyond their preschool years, as well as opportunities to use the language for learning and to be exposed to and have opportunities to practice with increasingly complex forms of the language functional settings (Lightbown, 2008). While learning more than one language can produce enhanced cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness once children are fully bilingual (Bialystok, 1991; King & Mackey, 2007), there can indeed be real risks to children's academic achievement if they are struggling to learn more than one language over an inadequate time period with inadequate resources and instruction. Children need ongoing support for developing proficiency in their first language in order not to fall behind in content-area learning, as well as ongoing opportunities to develop proficiency in their second language well into secondary school (Ball, 2011). The piecemeal, bootstrapped approaches that depend solely upon community-initiated and sustained efforts are not likely to yield sought-after gains in Indigenous children's educational success,

⁴ <http://www.uvcs.uvic.ca/languages/>

⁵ <http://www.uvic.ca/education/home/home/indigenous/index.php>

ability to communicate with older generations who speak an Indigenous language, and positive self-concept as valued members of Canada's multilingual mosaic.

Ways forward. Indigenous languages need to be elevated to equal standing with the existing colonial official languages, at federal, provincial, and territorial levels.⁶ Language-in-education policies must address the historically created needs and goals of Indigenous families and ensure their cultural safety and dignity and children's opportunity to learn in the context of linguistically and culturally meaningful teaching and curricula (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007). Political will must be followed by action taken by school administrators, teachers, and teacher education colleges. These actions must be informed by a federally funded program of research that can generate knowledge about what kinds of pedagogical and curriculum innovations are likely to be effective under what conditions to support diverse Indigenous learners. As well, a key recommendation of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures (2005) is the creation of a federally funded National Centre for Indigenous Languages to coordinate orthographies, learning resources, curricula, databases of speakers, and research efforts.

Conclusion

The relentless pressure to set aside one's distinctive language and culture in order to access the resources and privileges of a dominant social group with its dominant cultural education perpetuates processes of discrimination and minoritization associated with colonialism and promotes linguistic and cultural loss. Despite growing parent demand, international rhetoric about respect for human dignity and diversity, and incontrovertible evidence of the effectiveness of quality education provided in children's first language, many educational systems throughout the Commonwealth insist on exclusive use of certain privileged languages - and prescribed dialects of those languages - while preventing other languages, and often the children who speak them, from flourishing. Language-in-education policies are often motivated by an explicit or hidden curriculum of assimilation (Cummins, 2000). Nowhere have these intentions been more

⁶ The Northwest Territories and Nunavut recognize the Indigenous languages of their respective territories as official alongside the official languages of Canada.

overt than in Canada, where successive governments have introduced new ways to obstruct intergenerational transmission and flourishing of the country's vast linguistic diversity within Indigenous and ethnolinguistic minority families.

In a post-colonial world, guided by the aspirations of the Commonwealth Charter, public education should support all children's cultural identity, community cohesion, and educational success by providing instruction in multiple languages, with opportunities for parents to choose to have their children learn in their mother tongue until they have become fully literate. Some educators argue that universal primary education is likely to be achieved only in those countries where instruction is provided in children's mother tongues. Given the slow and uneven progress of Education for All,⁷ and the persisting lack of social justice for population segments in Commonwealth countries whose languages and livelihoods have been compromised by colonial policies, government decision-makers and leaders in education must seize upon language-in-education policy and practice as an avenue for redress, reconciliation, educational success, social inclusion, and economic prosperity.

⁷ *Goal 1:* Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills.

References

- Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia (2011). *Resources*.
<http://www.ahsabc.net/viewcategory/17>
- Aguilera, D., & LeCompte, M. (2007). Resiliency in Native languages: The tale of three Indigenous communities' experiences with language immersion. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 46(3), 11-36.
- Arnold, C., Bartlett, K., Gowani, S., & Merali, R. (2006). *Is everybody ready? Readiness, transition and continuity: Reflections and moving forward*. Background paper for Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007.
- Assembly of First Nations (2000). *A time to listen and a time to act: National First Nations language strategy*. Ottawa, ON: Assembly of First Nations: Language Secretariat.
- Aylward, M. L. (2010). The role of Inuit languages in Nunavut schooling: Nunavut teachers talk about bilingual education. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 33(2), 295-328.
- Ball, J. (2009). Supporting young Indigenous children's language development in Canada: A review of research on needs and promising practices. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 66(1), 20-47.
- Ball, J. (2011). *Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years*. Paris: UNESCO, (87 pp.) Pub. ED-2011/WS/21. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/resources/online-materials/publications/unesdoc-database/>
- Ball, J. (2012a). Promoting education equity for Indigenous children in Canada through quality early childhood programs. In J. Heyman (Ed.), *Increasing equity in education: Successful approaches from around the world* (pp. 282-312). Oxford University Press.
- Ball, J. (2012b). Government involvement III: Long-term federal investments in strengthening Indigenous capacity for culturally based preschool. In N. Howe & L. Prochner (Eds.). *New directions in early childhood education and care in Canada* (pp.337-366). Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Ball, J., & Bernhardt, B. M. (2012). Standard English as a second dialect: A Canadian perspective. In A. Yiakoumetti (Ed.) *Harnessing linguistic variation to improve education*. Rethinking Education Vol. 5. (pp. 189-226). Bern: Peter Lang.
- Ball, J., & Lewis, M. (2011). "An altogether different approach": Roles of speech and language pathologists in supporting Indigenous children's language development. *Journal of Speech, Language and Audiology, Special issue on Indigenous contexts*, 35 (2), 144-159.

- Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing.
- Battisti, M., Friesen, J., & Krauth, B. (2014). English as a second dialect policy and achievement of Aboriginal students in British Columbia. *Canadian Public Policy*, 40(2), 182-192.
- Benson, C. (2002). Real and potential benefits of bilingual programmes in developing countries. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 5 (6), 303-317.
- Benson, C., & Kosonen, K. (Eds.) (2013). *Language issues in comparative education: Inclusive teaching and learning in non-dominant languages and cultures*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Bialystok, E. (2001). *Bilingualism in development: Language, literacy, and cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bougie, E., Wright, S.C., & Taylor, D.M. (2003). Early heritage-language education and the abrupt shift to a dominant-language classroom: Impact on the personal and collective esteem of Inuit children in the Arctic Quebec. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 6 (5), 349-373.
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Digital Archives. Canadian government apologies to Japanese. <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/war-conflict/second-world-war/relocation-to-redress-the-internment-of-the-japanese-canadians/apology-to-japanese-canadians.html>
- Canadian Council on Learning (2009). *The state of Aboriginal learning in Canada: A holistic approach to measuring success*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/sal2009>
- Canadian Heritage (2005). *Towards a new beginning: a foundation report for a strategy to revitalize First Nation, Inuit, and Métis languages and cultures*. Report to the Minister of Canadian Heritage by the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, Jun, 2005. Ottawa. Cat. No. CH4-96/2005.
- Charron, N. (2010). *Exploring the links between Aboriginal-language-medium instruction and academic performance: A literature review in support of the PCH Aboriginal Languages Initiative*. Canada Heritage: Aboriginal Affairs Branch, Policy and Research Directorate.
- Commonwealth (2012). Charter of the Commonwealth. Retrieved from: <http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/page/documents/CharteroftheCommonwealth.pdf>
- Crystal, D. (2000). *Language death*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Cummins, J. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research*, 49(2), 222-251.

- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- First Nations Education Steering Committee (2001). Developmental standard term certificate (DSTC): Bulletin. *Aboriginal Languages Newsletter*, 1, 4.
- Francis, D.J., Lesaux, N.K., & August, D.L. (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the national literacy panel on language-minority children and youth*. Washington DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Fulford, G. (2007). *Sharing our success: More case studies in Aboriginal schooling*. Kelowna, BC: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education.
- Gourd, K. M. (2007). A critical examination of language policies and practices in Canada and the United States. In R. Joshee & L. Johnson (Eds.), *Multicultural education policies in Canada and the United States* (pp. 120-128). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Government of Canada (2014). Aboriginal Languages Initiative – Aboriginal Peoples’ Program. Ottawa: Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage.
<http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1267285112203>
- Guèvremont, A., & Kohen, D. (2010). *Knowledge of an Aboriginal language and school outcomes*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, Health Analysis Division.
- Hinton, L. & Hale, K. (Eds.), *The green book of language revitalization in practice*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Hoover, M., & the Kanien’kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center (1992). The revival of the language in Kahnawake. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 12(2), 269-287.
- Hovens, M. (2002). Bilingual education in West Africa: Does it work? *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 5 (5), 249-266.
- Kazimi, A. (2004). *Continuous journey*. Toronto: Peripheral Visions Productions.
- King, K., & Mackey, A. (2007). *The bilingual edge: Why, when, and how to teach your child a second language*. New York: Collins.
- Kosonen, K. (2005). Education in local languages: Policy and practice in Southeast Asia. *First languages first: Community-based literacy programmes for minority language contexts in Asia*. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok.
- Krashen, S. (1999). *Condemned without a trial: Bogus arguments against bilingual education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Lightbown, P. M. (2008). Easy as pie? Children learning languages. *Concordia Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 1, 1-25.

- Ljunggren, D. (2009, September 25). Every G20 nation wants to be Canada, insists PM. *Reuters*. Retrieved from: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/09/26/columns-us-g20-canada-advantages-idUSTRE58P05Z20090926>
- Louis, W., & Taylor, D. M. (2001). When the survival of a language is at stake: The future of Inuttitut in Arctic Québec. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 20(1-2), 111-143.
- Mackey, E. (2013). The apologizers' apology. In J. Henderson & P. Wakeham (Eds.). *Reconciling Canada: Critical perspectives on the culture of redress* (pp. 47-62). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Miller, J. R. (1996). *Shingwauk's vision: A history of Native residential schools*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Milloy, J. S. (1999). *"A national crime": The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.
- Mohanty, A.K., Panda, M., Phillipson, R., & Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2009). *Multilingual education for social justice: Globalizing the local*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.
- Norris, M. J. (2006). Aboriginal languages in Canada: Trends and perspectives on maintenance and revitalization. In Jerry P. White, Dan Beavon, & Susan Wingert (Eds.), *Indigenous policy research: Moving forward, making a difference* (pp. 197-228). Vol. 3. Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.
- Moseley, C. (Ed.). (2010). *Atlas of the world's languages in danger (3rd Ed)*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- Northwest Territories (1988). *Official languages act*. Yellowknife, NT: Government of the Northwest Territories.
- Office of the Prime Minister (2006). Address by the Prime Minister on the Chinese Head Tax Redress. Ottawa: Government of Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2006/06/22/address-prime-minister-chinese-head-tax-redress>
- Office of the Prime Minister (2008). *PM offers full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian residential schools system*. Retrieved from: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=2146>
- Parliament of Canada (2009). *Nunavut official languages act*. Retrieved from: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>
- Peltier, S. (2009). *First Nations English dialects in young children: Assessment issues and supportive interventions*. Ottawa: Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network.

- Philpott, D. F. (2006). Identifying the learning needs of Innu students: Creating a model of culturally appropriate assessment. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 26 (2), 361-381.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996). *Gathering strength: Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 13. Ottawa: Canada Communication Group Publishing.
- Senate of Canada (2009). *Bill S-237: An act for the advancement of the Aboriginal languages of Canada and to recognize and respect Aboriginal language rights*. Ottawa, ON: Publishing and Depository Services.
- Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1967). *Report of the Royal Commission on bilingualism and biculturalism: General introduction and book 1, the official languages*. Ottawa, ON: Queen's Printer.
- Simpson, J., & Wigglesworth, G. (2008). *Children's language and multilingualism: Indigenous language use at home and school*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Statistics Canada (2011). *The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada: National Household Survey 2011*. Catalogue no. 99-012-X2011003. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/99-012-x2011003_3-eng.pdf
- Statistics Canada (2012). *Linguistic characteristics of Canadians. Language - 2011 Census of Population*. Ottawa: Author.
- Sterzuk, A. (2010). Indigenous English and Standard Language Ideology: Towards a Postcolonial View of English in Teacher education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 32, 100-113.
- Smith, Z. (2010). *Speaking in tongues*. In C. Hitchens (Ed.). *The best American essays* (pp.179-194). New York: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt.
- Taylor, D. M., & Wright, S. C. (2003). Do Aboriginal students benefit from education in their heritage language? Results from a ten-year program of research in Nunavik. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 23(1), 1-24.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2012). *TRC Interim Report: Canada, Aboriginal Peoples and Residential Schools: They Came for the Children*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- UNESCO (1953). *The use of the vernacular languages in education*. Monographs on Foundations of Education, No. 8. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2003). *Education in a multilingual world*. UNESCO Education Position Paper. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO Bangkok (2005). *Advocacy brief on mother tongue-based teaching and education for girls*. Bangkok: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2008a). *Mother Tongue Matters: Local Language as a Key to Effective Learning*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

UNESCO (2008b). *Mother tongue instruction in early childhood education: A selected bibliography*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

UNESCO (2014). UNESCO: No progress in reducing global number of children out of school. Paris: UNESCO Media Services. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/in-focus/articles/unesco-no-progress-in-reducing-global-number-of-children-out-of-school/>

United Nations (2008). United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. New York, NY: Author.

Verhoeven, L.T. (1994). Transfer in bilingual development: The linguistic interdependence hypothesis revisited. *Language Learning: A Journal of Research in Language Studies*, 44(3), 381-415.

Wright, S.C., Taylor, D.M., & MacArthur, J. (2000). Subtractive bilingualism and the survival of the Inuit language: Heritage- versus second-language education. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(1), 63-84.

Yiakoumetti, A. (Ed.) (2012). *Harnessing linguistic variation to improve education*. Rethinking Education Vol. 5. Bern: Peter Lang.