WAH WAH ŠIKWA ONŌSIHSAH: NAHKAWĖWIN REVITALIZATION THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCES

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By
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Denise Amanda Dawn Kennedy, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, **WAH WAH ŠIKWA ONŌSIHSAH: NAHKAWÉWIN REVITALIZATION THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCES**, in an oral examination held on March 16, 2021. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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This study explores Nahkawēwin language revitalization. This study draws on the language nest model, which first originated with Maori grandmothers and their grandchildren. In this study, my mother and I created a mini language nest in both of our homes to teach my children the gift of their language, Nahkawēwin. My research was guided by three questions: 1) How will language nests help my family and my community? 2) What are the challenges for using a language nest for Indigenous language revitalization? and 3) How can Elders, lodges and homes be agents and sites of Indigenous language revitalization? In answering these questions, I have used both Western and Indigenous knowledge and research methodology.

The language nest not only brought the language alive in our homes, it brought determination, hope, and connection; connection not only to the language, but to our culture. It brought closeness to our family in ways that were not present before. This mini language nest was not to only benefit my children, but also the children of my community and other communities seeking ways to revitalize their languages in the comforts of their own homes, naturally and holistically. Home-based language learning is so much more than learning the language within the walls of the home, but it opens up opportunities to re-examine what it means to have a home in general, what it means to take care of a home, and what it means to live with purpose. If we have healthier homes, we can have a healthier community. During the study, it became apparent to me just how hard language revitalization could be in an English dominant society. Though there may be many challenges, one needs to keep going and celebrate the small successes in language learning, as they are still successes. Our Elders and our ceremonies must be acknowledged in language learning, as in Anihšināpē world view. Our languages are a gift from our Creator and they too have a spirit.
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Kihci Mîkwêc, Kinanâkomínim
DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Personal Connection

In the summer of 2018, my mother, my sons and I created a mini language nest in our homes. Language nests are places for young children that provide an immersion environment in their Indigenous language (McIvor, & Parker, 2016). This was the beginning of us, as a family, trying to reclaim the Nahkawēwin for my sons. Before moving any further with our story of language reclamation, let me first explain how I talk about language in this thesis. You will see me say “the language” from time to time in my writing, this is when I am referring to Indigenous languages whether it be my own or that of another Indigenous language. You will also see me use the terms Saulteaux, Nahkawēwin and sometimes Anihšināpēmowin when referring to my own language. I acknowledge all these ways of naming our language because they have been used by my people since I can remember. In the title of this particular thesis, I will use the term Nahkwēwin, because this is the term my mother uses when referring to our language. Margaret Cote’s Saulteaux textbook, which was made it in the 1980s, also uses this name in its title “Nahkawēwin, Saulteaux (Ojibway Dialect of the Plains) (Cote, 1985). This textbook was later revised and is now called, “Mācī Anihšināpēmowin” (Beginning Saulteaux) (Cote & Cote, 2020). The language that I refer to as Saulteaux, Nahkawēwin and sometimes Anihšināpēmowin is part of a spectrum of mutually intelligible forms spread throughout a large geographic region (Cote, 2012). In my home community of Pasqua First Nation, the term Saulteaux is the main term used when referring to the language. With respect to the Elders and speakers of the language throughout Canada, I acknowledge all language names and dialects.

My children grew up in a home where culture and language are important. Even though culture and language are important, English was still the dominant language spoken in our
homes. Why? It could be forgetfulness, it could be laziness or it could be that life is fast and life is busy, so busy that it is just easier to use the language that is everywhere. Sad excuse, I know.

When I became a language teacher for our home community, I did not realize how important language learning was and how scarce it was in my community. I started to realize how important our languages are and how necessary they are for our people to know and understand in a deeper depth. I guess you could say, that I had taken language learning and teaching for granted, I figured having parents who knew the language, and family who spoke the language was normal, and that it was not so much an issue. As I worked with the children of my nation, I started to realize how pitiful my nation was in language knowledge. This is when I started to shift the way that I looked at language learning, it was now something that was necessary for the identity of my people and it needed to be more of a priority. My students taught me that though they learn the language in the classroom, once they go home, they have no one to speak it to. Which is sad but understandable because, in our community, a lot of the adults do not know their language.

I realized that my nation was strong in their culture and ceremony, but limited in their language knowledge. Our Elders and knowledge keepers are valuable assets in our community. They are called upon to pray in the language when it comes to community events, such as meetings, powwows, feasts, ceremonies. You can hear the language strong through prayer, through ceremony, but in the day-to-day world, it is English that is mainly spoken. What happens when our Elders who are strong in the language leave us? They take their language and knowledge with them. With this understanding, it is important for us to start learning from our knowledge keepers, lodge keepers and our language keepers, so that when our elders leave us, we are still strong in these areas. I realized that I was holding my children back from language
learning by not teaching them their language in their home. We had all the tools we needed, so why weren’t we using these tools to teach my sons? We are rich in the language and in culture, so why did it take me so long to reclaim the language for my sons? I had to get past these questions because they were depressing and unmotivating. Instead of sulking about time wasted, I decided now was the time to do something about it. Instead of just teaching my sons in the classroom, I needed to teach them in their home with their grandmother and in their natural surroundings. If I could create language learning in my home with my own children, this would benefit the rest of the children in my community and establish a brand-new way of language learning for my community members of Pasqua First Nation and other Indigenous communities throughout Canada.

I used the process of “self-locating” throughout my whole study. As the mother and the researcher in my study, it is important for me to situate myself in the study to show that this is not just a project to learn and gain knowledge about, but also to show the actual importance and motive for my study. As Kovach states, preparation assumes self-awareness and the ability to situate self within the research (Kovach, 2010). Self-location is used mainly in qualitative research approaches. It allows the researcher to self-reflect one’s life in their research. It allows us to use our truths and our experiences as means of validation in our writing. In using this method, it will allow my readers to understand where I am coming from, where I stand in my research, and why I am there. Self-locating not only gives people an idea of who I am as an Anihšināpē woman, but it also gives credit, respect and acknowledgement to my ancestors; to the spirits which I ask to guide me through everything I do, especially ci manito (The Creator); and also, to our ceremonies. The term Anihšināpē is a Saulteaux term that is used by Saulteaux/Ojibway speakers when addressing First Nation people who have been on the land.
since before settler contact. Anihšināpē, translates into “the First people of the land,” not necessarily referring to a specific Indigenous language group.

Self-locating in my research is very similar to the narrative research methodology. Lewis and Adeney state that the researcher lives within the research and is committed to studying phenomena in their natural settings (Lewis & Adeney, 2014). With narrative research, just as in self-locating, you make the research a part of who you are. As a narrative researcher, I am not only personally involved in our study, but we tend to change as researchers and as individuals as our research and outcomes unfold (Mills & Birks, 2014). As Kovach states, Indigenous research allows us to transform into what we are learning (Kovach, 2005). Wilson (2008) states that self-location is a research method that brings an understanding to what is being researched, how the data is being analyzed, and what results are deemed important for community interests and goals.

In creating our language nest, I had big plans and, because the research was taking place in our homes, I believed at that time that our nest would run smoothly, but I was surprised to find that everyday life in an English dominated society filled our homes almost in every way. This opened my eyes and allowed me to become more aware of the reality of language revitalization in a modern-day society. With this awakening, my research and thoughts had to change along with my mishaps and misconceptions related to how a language nest should occur. With the use of self-locating, it made my research more realistic and alive even when things did not go as I wanted them to or how I planned for them to take place. The truth was there about language retention and revitalization whether I agreed with the outcome or not.

1.2 Effects of Language Loss
Colonial efforts from the Canadian government including, but not limited to, policy and the residential school era have taken a toll on our Indigenous languages. There are two main reasons why our Indigenous languages are in the state they are today. First, Indigenous people were forbidden to speak their languages in places that placed them into Indian Residential Schools and forcibly removed from families, and, second, Indigenous peoples were prevented from engaging in cultural practices that traditionally sustained Indigenous languages. Most Indigenous languages in Canada are in a state of being lost within the next few generations, and communities are now working on ways to reverse the language damage that has happened (Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009). Even though the residential school era has not happened during some of our children’s lifetimes, it certainly has had effects on their Indigenous languages and cultural awareness.

UNESCO states that the most effective way to keep Indigenous languages from disappearing is to create positive environments for language learners to use the language and teach their children (United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2016). This is a hard task for our children and youth to achieve because languages are not being taught in their homes, by their families. A language that is losing its child speakers is at risk for disappearing (Fillmore, 2000). It is our responsibility as parents and language teachers to teach our children their culture and language, or at least to show community and families how to do this.

Throughout the world there are about 250 nations which include approximately 6000 languages. These numbers suggest that there are very few languages with countries of their own (Hinton, 2001). The language that has the greatest number of native speakers is that of the Mandarin Chinese, which is the official language of China. Spanish is the second most common spoken language, and English is the third most common language in the world with 400 million speakers, but it has over 500 million second language speakers, and is regarded as the global lingua
The English language is said to be the most powerful language in the world, because it is the de facto language of the largest economies; the United States of America, Canada, and the United Kingdom (Chan, 2016). Even ten years prior, English was said to be so powerful that no other language matched its level of growth (Crystal, 1997).

With English being the dominant language globally, it has caused stress to a great extent on Indigenous languages, especially in North America. In Canada where English and French are the official languages, English is still seen as significantly privileged over French (Davis, 2017). If there is a noticeable privilege between Canada’s two official languages, it is fair to say that Indigenous languages in Canada need to be worked on and maintained to even be considered or recognized. Indigenous languages in Canada have been seen as primitive and non-inconsequential since settler arrival has begun. This started with the era of the residential schools, which were designed to take away culture, language, and identity from Indigenous people (Partridge, 2010). Indigenous languages have always been on the margins in a society where linguistic hierarchies have overpowered the importance of Indigenous languages through not only status of the language but also in terms of funding (Davis, 2017). With the lack of funds, this results in significant language loss, amongst other things. Most communities need funding to gain resources, to run language programs. Funding could be used to pay teachers, language speakers, to find space, and to develop language books and learning resources. Sixty percent of Canadian Indigenous languages are spoken in British Columbia; a total of 34 Indigenous languages and over 90 dialects. These languages are also in danger of becoming extinct.

Like Indigenous languages in British Columbia, the Indigenous languages in the prairie provinces have also suffered. Pasqua First Nation is right in the heart of the prairie provinces. Fewer than five people speak their language fluently on Pasqua, which holds members from Cree
and Saulteaux backgrounds. Pasqua is suffering in language loss because no one over school-age speaks either Saulteaux or Cree. The school has a language curriculum that is taught to the students of the First Nation, but that is where the language stays because the students do not have anyone else to speak it with at home or in the community. Evening classes are available to community members, but even this can be inconsistent due to insufficient funding for the language program (Cyr, 2015). With these alarming numbers and critical start of our community languages, I have found it imperative to do my study at home.

Pasqua First Nation has about 3000 members, with just over seven hundred members living on the First Nation. Being an active member in the community who works with language, I know that the numbers of speakers on the First Nation are low. As the community’s textbook states, only a few Pasqua First Nation members speak their Indigenous language (Cyr, 2015). There have been plans of creating a Master Apprentice Program on Pasqua First Nation but this has not yet happened. Being a member of Pasqua First Nation, a mother, and a language keeper in the community, it was important for me to model different ways of learning the language starting in our homes, with our Elders, and through our ceremonies and our ways of life. For me to do this, I had to use my own family for this research project as a guide and to teach other members of the community that even though language work can be hard, it can be done and it can start at home.

1.3 Project Overview and Conclusion

This study is guided by three simple, but very important research questions. Answering these questions through this study will help with the language learning not only of my family and community, but other communities and families interested in language seeking and learning. My main questions for this research are as follows:
1) How will language nests help my family and my community?

2) What are the challenges for using a language nest for Indigenous language revitalization?

3) How can Elders, lodges and homes be agents and sites of Indigenous language revitalization?

This study supports language revitalization within the families alongside family members in the comfort of your own familiar surroundings. The study examines the role of our Elders, our knowledge keepers, and other important people in revitalizing our Indigenous languages. Some might argue that it is easier to pick up a book, read a dictionary, or go online for language learning, but with Indigenous languages they need to be treated with respect and protocol. Our languages are not just words and phrases with direct meanings as in the English language, they instead have very descriptive meanings behind everything. The following chapters will provide a literature review, give a description of my methodology, summarize the happenings and findings that were done throughout the study and conclude with a discussion of implications and recommendations. This thesis will explore the different avenues I have explored to successfully promote language learning in a holistic manner. It will also discuss some of the challenges that we were faced with in using the mini language nest model.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review is compiled together by documented research from peer-reviewed journals and book entries. The articles present views from Indigenous voice, world view, experiences and thought. It also contains studies related to other minority language groups, that tend to have similar structure for learning activity outcomes as Indigenous language revitalization would. It is imperative, though, that most of the literature obtained throughout this study focuses on Indigenous thoughts and worldviews and involved Indigenous communities, Elders, and language goals simply, because Indigenous ways of life are distinctive to that of others. The study is intended to produce language revitalization models that could be seen, heard, and used in communities who are struggling to retain or revive their language.

This literature review will first look at language revitalization in Indigenous communities and other minority language communities. It will take a look at what these communities have done in terms of language revitalization and or retention. The literature will then look at the concept of a language nest as a whole; who has used them, how they were used, and their successes and outcomes for the different language groups or communities. In the process of the discussing the language nest, I will take a look at intergenerational learning within families and why it is important to learn your language at home with your families.

2.2 Language Revitalization

It is said that if the present trend continues, the majority of Indigenous languages will no longer be spoken by the end of the century (Montgomery-Anderson, 2008). The situation of
languages is diverse across Canada. For some communities, revitalization is needed while, in other communities, maintenance is needed (Galley, Gressner, & Herbert 2016). Language work, learning, and teaching all depend on the nation itself. Is the nation big or small? Are people close together or scattered? Are there speakers? All these concepts and situations influence language learning (Hinton, 2001). Without community initiatives, support, and direction, language strategies are not likely to succeed (Shaw, 2001). Community language planning is key for the success of language revitalization (Blair, 2002). A community must have a clear idea of their goals before attempting to revitalize or revive a language (Montgomery-Anderson, 2008).

With limited resources, there still have been different efforts of language work within the communities. The most common step to language revitalization in communities are “school-based programs, children’s programs outside the school, adult language programs, documentation and material development and homebased” (Gomashie, 2019). Now, which of these programs will work best within a community? Again, that all depends on the language situation of each community. I will now focus on some of the language initiatives that communities, language keepers, and leadership have used to revive or revitalize the language.

2.2.1 Research

Research needs to take into consideration each nation’s need for language revitalization or maintenance. Seeking answers to important questions through research is critical to addressing issues of recovering and maintaining languages (Kirkness, 2002). I believe that in Pasqua more research needs to be done on language learning and meeting language needs as related to our specific nation. What will work best for a nation where most of the children from that nation can speak more of the language than their own parents can? What can be done to get those parents to
learn with their children? Some Indigenous communities are choosing research partnerships to further language revitalization efforts in their communities (Kelly, 2015). There are other Indigenous researchers that are focusing on language research for their own communities and language groups, which is driven by Indigenous methodologies (Thompson 2012). I believe it is important to help all Indigenous nations with the notion of language revitalization, but it is important to first focus on the needs and maintenance of one’s own needs of language revitalization efforts.

2.2.2 Language Planning

Language planning and language committees need to take place in communities. This way language revitalization can be made mandatory and not only put on the shoulders of one or two people. Communities need to have a clear understanding of its goals before attempting either language revitalization or language revival (Montgomery-Anderson 2008). Communities are recognizing that long term planning is a crucial first step towards long term continuation or revival of their language (McIvor & Anisman, 2018).

2.2.3 Documentation

Current strategies to revive and revitalize the language are being employed in Indigenous communities throughout Canada. (McIvor, 2015). Some of these initiatives are limited because of lack of funding, interest or resources in that community. Every nation is unique in their own way when it pertains to language. With language work being so hard given the lack of resources, confidence or commitment, communities may settle for smaller goals of language revival or revitalization (Hinton, 2001). Himmelmann states that documentation’s main goal is to provide a comprehensive record of the linguistic practices characterized by a given speech community
Speakers can be one source of preservation to save the remains of the language before it is too late. The importance of documentation for the communities of speakers of endangered languages is clear (Jimerson & Prud’hommeaux, 2018). Documentation can help preserve stories, songs, history, prayers, and the unique sounds of Indigenous languages. I believe documentation of our elders’ knowledge is important due to the fact that when they leave this world, they are gone and all of their knowledge is gone with them. Documentation can aid language revitalization strategies in a positive way, but in itself it will not create speakers (First Peoples’ Cultural Council, 2020). On the other hand, Hinton (2011), would argue that even the so-called extinct languages are being revitalized through the use of documentation. Dictionaries are being created which can aid teachers in teaching the language and learners learning the language. Online dictionaries such as “The Ojibwe people’s dictionary” (University of Minnesota, Department of American Indian Studies, 2012) and The Alberta Elders Cree Dictionary (LeClair & Cardinal 2002) are two examples. There are many other documented online resources that can aid language learning and teaching throughout the world (Galla, 2016). Advanced technology can create learning resources and documented language contexts such as language sites, learning apps, and websites. Some examples of can be the language app created for the five language groups in Saskatchewan based on Saulteaux, Cree, Nakota, Lakota and Dakota languages (File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council 2012). This app gives the user the ability to see, hear, and read the text in the language. The languages are spoken by community elders in the treaty four area (File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal council 2012). There are many different documented resources online and in communities that help aid in language learning.

2.2.4 Curriculum Development & Materials
Creating resources and materials can be another strategy that community uses to attempt to revitalize a language. Kirkness (2002) suggests that curriculum development is necessary for recreating an intergenerational transmission process. A community approach to developing language curriculum would be the most effective way for everyone to have a chance at learning the language (Kirkness, 2002). Other scholars suggest that creating learning materials is necessary if the language is in hibernation. Hibernation, in this context, is when the language is sleeping and language materials are needed to be revived or revitalized. (Montgomery-Anderson, 2008). For language materials to be successful in community language learning, the materials need to be developed in the community to make the heritage language learners a part of the process and to capture the language in context (Hermes, Bang & Marin, 2012). The Saskatchewan Indigenous cultural center has been involved in creating different language curricular resources for language teachers, such as Teaching Sacred Language Curriculum (SICC, 2018) and A Mentor-Apprentice Guide (SICC, 2019). These curricular resources help language teachers to set a foundation and guide for their teaching in classrooms or communities. Ignace (2016) is a community engaged linguist who wrote a guide for developing First Nations language curriculum to assist community members in the process. I believe that in creating curricular materials for a community, the materials should be built around the needs and background of that nation. Our Elders need to be involved in the creation of language and culture curriculum to ensure that we are doing things properly.

2.2.5 School based learning

School programs are popular ways of language learning in a community, and can be seen as something positive because children are learning the language together in large groups and at the same age (Hinton, 2011). School based language learning is probably the most common form
of language learning, but it is not a method that creates fluent speakers (Blair, 2002). Language classes are good, but bilingual schools will create speakers with more fluency. This is where the language is given the same amount of instruction time as the English language, if not more (Hinton 2011). The creation of enriched second language programs in schools represent an attempt to revitalize language and culture (McCarty, 2003). A limited factor for creating school-based learning is the lack of licensed educators who acquire the necessary attributes for accomplishing school-based language learning (Richards & Burnaby 2008). One example of an Indigenous bilingual school is a community-controlled school called Rock Point Community School of the Navajo in Arizona (Bosesker, 2000). In Thompson Manitoba, the first Cree-English bilingual school was created in 2001 (Fulford, 2007). The school that I teach in treats the language as if it is another subject, which is fine, but there is so much more that can be done. My students leave the classroom knowing a lot of their language, but once they get home, they have no one to speak it to. Our parents need to be involved in the language learning process.

2.2.6 Teacher training

In order to have successful school-based language learning there must be teachers. Some communities make it a priority to create language teachers, which is one strategy for language retention and revitalization in that community. (Smith & Peck, 2004). It has been found that fluent language speakers do not necessarily make effective language teachers, because they do not understand the difficulties of learning the language (Jacobs, 1998). I see this a lot with the language speakers in our community. They are great in the language because they are fluent, but they do not make very good teachers of the language because it is something that is known to them and they feel it should not be difficult to understand. By preparing language teachers, learners will not only
learn the language but it will give the language teachers the confidence in speaking, reading, and writing in the languages they are teaching (Smith & Peck, 2004). To save the languages there must be appropriate certified training programs available for people to become language teachers, interpreters, linguists, curriculum developers, and researchers (Kirkness, 2002). I believe languages can be saved with patience, forgiveness, and determination. Not everyone has to be a “teacher” to learn or teach the language in their own home, in their own communities, and in their own spaces. In Saskatchewan, First Nations University of Canada offers a Bachelor of Arts degree focusing on Indigenous languages, a First Nations language instructors’ certificate for the five languages, and a Masters of Arts in specialization in languages/linguistics (First Nations University of Canada, 2021). These programs are great if you plan on teaching children or adults in a classroom setting but anyone can learn their language with determination, focus and patience, as well as with elder guidance, ceremonial guidance, and understanding.

2.2.7 Immersion learning

Language immersion education is a common strategy used for reversing language shift, with the idea that language learners will use the language outside of school with family and friends (Fishman, 2001). Language immersion programming offers the more effective solution to the challenge of language maintenance (Morcom, 2019). Immersion programs are built on the premise that the best way to learn a language is to create an environment where the language, and only the language is constantly used (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Immersion education is demonstrably improving intercultural competency for all learners by offering strong cultural and language programming (McInnes, 2013). Immersion practices could be summer programs that last for one or two weeks of intensive language learning, learning outside the classroom to have daily life
experiences of the language (McIvor, 2012). Other immersion practices for adult learners could be used so the adults can learn the language and then pass it down to their children in their homes. A true language revival means that committed adult learners will take their knowledge and create a learning environment for their children (Montgomery-Anderson, 2008).

The master apprentice program that originated in California matches a fluent elder speaker with a younger person to learn the language from in real life situations, often including traditional tasks or skills (Montgomery-Anderson, 2008). In Canada, the term mentor apprentice has been adopted as it has been preferred by the speakers (McIvor & Anisman 2018). The master apprentice program is one of the most favored teaching methods for Indigenous languages (Kono, 2010). It is a one-on-one teaching method based on common sense or experience, rather than learning from a book (Hinton, Vera & Steele, 2002). Though the program seems to have encouraged results, it can run into some problems due to finances and time. People need to be committed to specific and consistent times, and the masters of the program need to be paid accordingly. The basic prerequisites include physical factors such as infrastructure on one side, and the initiative of the language community on the other side (Olawsky, 2013). In looking at some of the cases where MAP was used, there were some successes in this program with the only problem being the time limit, not having enough commitment. This would cause a delay in language learning. All participants joined the program with the intention to improve their language knowledge, however the commitment to do this varied. Meeting everyday was too much and created problems, and meeting once or twice a week was preferred (Olawsky, 2013). Despite the limitations of this language model, some participants involved in the mentor (master) apprentice model have stated that this experience has allowed them to learn more about themselves, gain confidence in who they are, and gave them a sense of connection. This shows that mentor apprentice programs can go
beyond language learning. As it is helping even the fluent elders who have experience residential school trauma in using their language in a positive manner to help to teach others their language, it is putting those traumas aside and giving them their language back in a positive manner (Jennie, Anisman, McIvor & Jacobs, 2017).

For younger language learners, immersion schools have been created from Kindergarten to grade 12. The Maori and Hawaiians were first to implement this and to be successful in it, where oral proficiency is strong (Wilson & Kamanā, 2011). In Canada, the oldest and longest operating immersion school is the Mohawk and Kahnawá:ke school which offers kindergarten-to-grade six immersion programming. This school has been operating since the 1970’s (Maracle et al, 2011). Other immersion schools in Canada include the Onion Lake Cree Nation which has an immersion school from kindergarten to grade four (Mckinley, 2003). In SENCOTEN there is a kindergarten to grade four immersion language programs; the Xit’olacw school, offers kindergarten to grade two immersion; the Okanagan Indian Band offers four hours of immersion every day to their grade one to seven grades, and the Chief Ahtam school offers immersion for kindergarten to grade three and grades four to seven bilingual education (Billy, 2009; Michel 2012). Other successful immersion schools throughout Canada are the Mi’kMaq Eskasoni school with kindergarten to grade two immersion (Ball & McIvor, 2013) and the Kiizhik Gakendaasowin Anishinaabe offering kindergarten to grade two immersion (McIvor & Anisman 2018). I would love for our school in Pasqua to be an immersion school, but the sad reality of it, is we need more speakers who are willing to do the work. Even a bilingual school would be a wonderful success for our students and community. Other immersion models such as the language nest have been used for language revitalization and have been very successful. Te Kōhango Reo is considered one of the most
successful language revitalization models in the world (McClutchie Mita, 2007). I will go into further detail about the language nest later in this chapter.

2.2.8 Home based learning

School based learning is considered to be a good safety net for language revitalization efforts, but cannot replace the home as a center of language and culture transmission (Walsh, 2010). Fishman states that families should use the language at home as the primary language of communication, so that it becomes the first language of young children (Hinton, 2001). Hinton also suggests that parents who are speakers of the language should use their language skills with children and family (Hinton, 2013). Family is the most central and critical domain in the maintenance and reproduction of language (Shwarts, 2008). Speaking one’s language in the home provides the opportunity to normalize the use of endangered languages and supports the process of intergenerational transmission from parent-to-child (Norris, 2004). I believe home-based language learning is essential for our children to be successful in learning their language. It makes it seem as it is more important and more normal when the language is taught at home by parents and grandparents in natural settings and environments. Using lived experiences to teach the language is an asset to learning one’s culture and language. Intergenerational learning needs to come back into Indigenous ways of life.

2.2.9 Intergenerational learning

Intergenerational language transmission is when the language is passed down from parents to children, or from grandparents to grand children in normal familial interactions (Chrisp, 2005). Language revitalization is the main goal to achieve while creating a language
nest, but there are other benefits of the language nest such as intergenerational interactions, cooperation, and respect (Delaine, 2010). Language nests help to raise children with strong identities who are grounded in their language and culture and are connected to their communities. (Meek, 2010). This could not be done without the help or guidance of our Elders, and/or Grandparents. Research suggests that language nests show promise for the healing of intergenerational relationships and the reclamation of family ways of knowing and being (Chambers, 2014). Researchers have advocated for some time for intergenerational language transmission and cooperation of the community efforts for language revitalization, as Elders are part of the intergenerational web of language speakers and learners of the community (Borgia & Dowdy, 2010). I have always believed that our elders and lodge keepers are the true source to Indigenous learning.

Some research suggests that there is not enough evidence or knowledge about intergenerational language transmission to be considered a process. This is due to the gap of knowledge between child language acquisition scholars and sociolinguists (King, 2008). Intergenerational language transmission is looked at as something that is not appropriate for language learning to some, simply because it is viewed from a monolingual acquisition model that is not appropriate for language revitalization (Thornburn, 2012). Other research suggests that in order for language revitalization to take place, family language learning must take place between parents and children in the home. Fishman states that without intergenerational mother tongue transmission, no minority language maintenance is possible (Fishman, 1991). Norris also states that intergenerational transmission contributes to language revitalization. It is critical to increase speakers and, in order to do this, transmission of the languages must be restored from generation-to-generation (Norris, 2006). As an Indigenous mom, woman and daughter, I find it
very imperative for my children to learn their mother tongue in their own home, in their
grandparent’s home and in their community from their parents and their grandparents because
our language make us who we are as Indigenous people. As Indigenous people, our world views
are different to that of non-Indigenous people.

In creating a language nest, it is imperative to see and understand how valuable a child is,
and how they are to be treated when teaching them their language. There is no room for negative
discipline if the children do not say words or phrases correctly. When my sons did not want to
speak in the language, we did not scold, or force them to speak, we instead encouraged them and
stayed positive. In an Indigenous worldview our children are seen as gifts from the creator, and
are no less than an adult. That is why it is important for language learning to be done in the
homes with their families. Little Bear (2009) states that education and socialization are achieved
through praise, reward, recognition, and renewal ceremonies. Children are greatly valued, they
are strictly trained but with nothing but love. (Little Bear, 2009). As children, Elders are just as
important, and are considered our main teachers of life and all that it entails. Elders play a vital
role in passing on traditional knowledge to children (Hart, 2010).

2.3 Language Nests

The language nest model originated in New Zealand in 1973. It was created by a group of
Samoan and Cook Island mothers and their children. It later expanded to the Maori Te Kohanga
Reo concept movement that successfully emerged in New Zealand short after (Chambers, 2015).
The term “Te Kohanga Reo” is a Maori term which symbolizes the act of nurturing young
children in the language like a mother bird does in a nest, hence the term “language nest” (First
Peoples Cultural Council, 2014). Language nests are seen to be one of the more effective
immersion practices for early childhood learners. They have been recognized internationally as
Language nests are immersion learning models for language revitalization. Brant (2010) explains that language immersion is a method for teaching a second language (L2), where the target language is used for instruction (Brant, 2010). In other articles it states that language nests are language immersion models used in homes for language learning in a natural setting (First Peoples Cultural Council, 2014). A language nest creates a space where young children can be raised in the language with speakers whom are often elders (McIvor & Parker, 2016). The immersion environment of the nest supports the language acquisition instead of conscious language instruction (McIvor & Parker, 2016). Early childhood is a critical time for the development of cognitive and social skills along with cultural identity. The language nest supports these areas of growth. The Maori language program leaders acknowledge that raising children with two languages ensures that children can be comfortable with two cultures, have good interpersonal and problem-solving skills, be creative thinkers, and have a sense of belonging in their communities (Murphy, Tahua & Moala, 2005).

2.4 Language Nests Around the World

As stated earlier, the first language nest appeared in 1973 when a group of Samoan and Cook Island women set up the first language nest called Aoga Amata or Punanga Reo (Playgroup) in Tokora, New Zealand (Leaupepe & Sauni, 2014). In 1981 the Te Kōhanga Reo concept was developed (King, 2001). In 1982 in Hawai‘i, a group of Hawai‘ian parents formed a nonprofit society and opened the first Pūnana Leo nest program (Warner, 2001). In Canada, the first language nest was developed by Dorothy Lazore and Kahtehrón:ni Iris Staceyas in the
Mohawk community of Kahnawà:kwin in the early 1980s (Richards & Burnaby, 2008). In 1987, Kathy Michel and Janice Dick opened the Secwepemc Ka nest in the community of Adams Lake in British Columbia (Michel, 2012). In 1988 in Quebec, the Cree developed a language immersion program at the preschool and kindergarten level (Stiles, 1997). I will now give some insights to what has been created in terms of language nests, not only in Canada but from all over the world.

2.4.1 Pacific Island Language Nests

In 1973, a group of Samoan and Cook Island mothers who “believed that other forms of preschool education were not meeting the needs of their children” (Utumapu, 1998). The language nest eventually started to expand, and they received funding from the New Zealand Department of Education (Coxon et al., 2002). In 1984, the A’oga Fa’a Samoa language nest was established as the first licensed and chartered Pacific Island center (Taouma et al., 2003). Samoan mothers and elders played a significant role in the delivery of the Pacific Island Language Nest Program. (Chambers, 2015). Mothers helped the elders to recite specific important knowledge to the children in the language nest, things such as legends (Utumapu, 1998). The children in these language nests learned respect, cultural pride, family dignity, self-esteem, sharing, and caring for others; Samoan language; the art of singing and dancing; family member roles; the Samoan preparation and presentation of food; handicrafts; cultural games; Samoan way of hosting visitors; and the importance of listening to and obeying elders (Utumapu, 1998).

As one could see, the children were not only learning their language, they were learning every concept that was necessary and possible to be a well-rounded Samoan individual. Mothers
and grandparents are needed in order for these teachings and learnings to be successful. Parents of these language nests were at first opinionated and suspicious of the language nest. They had to witness themselves how the language nest operated and the see the positive results in their children (Utamapu, 1998). By 1996, 176 Pacific Island language nests had a total of 3,736 children in attendance (Chambers, 2015). Chambers (2015) also notes during his assessment of language nest that there is not much literature that mentions the Pacific Island language nest movement. I also noted that when searching for materials on the Pacific Island Language nest movement, there is not much literature to choose from. More literature needs to be produced to acknowledge the language nest movement that was so successful and that had created a base for other language nests to happen throughout the world.

2.4.2 Te Kōhanga Reo

Te Kōhanga Reo translates as “the language nest” (Hohepa et al., 1992). In 1981, Maori concerns for their language resulting in the funding of the language nest by the Department of Māori affairs (King, 2001). The Department funded the program from the beginning. Te Kōhanga Reo attracted children who had not participated in conventional early childhood education programs (King, 2001). Te Kōhanga Reo is a kind of childcare center that fuses together the structural format of preschool and day care and combines them with Māori style of operation (Fleras, 1987). The main purpose of this language nest was to create bilingual and bicultural individuals who possess the confidence and skills to achieve success in either world (Fleras, 1987). I believe that even though this literature is quite old, the goals and the bases for these nests would still be valid in today’s world. We want our children to be rich in their culture and language. Also, we want them to be able to be successful in a world of different worldview.
and life, but to have that confidence and knowledge of who they are first and who they will always be. Te Kōhanga Reo experience difficulties in the first 10 years of operation. Programs were staffed by a blend of fluent elders and younger women. There was a need for the elders to share their knowledge through context rich environments using natural language acquisition, as well as for the younger staff to improve their language skills. As a result of these needs, a three-year training program was created that covered the history and philosophy of Te Kōhanga Reo, Māori ways of knowing (King, 2001). Even back then, the whole concept of not having enough qualified teachers in the language programs affected the operation of the nest. The elders again were needed as a base of the learning process. In today’s world, our elders are still needed and we still need language and culturally committed people to employ these operations to create successful language immersion models. The initial success and rapid growth of the Kōhanga Reo in the 1980’s was the result of the efforts of the parent and elder volunteers, as only 10% of the workers in Te Hōhanga Reo were paid (Stiles, 1997).

2.4.3 ‘Aha Pūnana Leo Hawai’ian Nest

Pūnana Leo means “nest of voices” (Ionkepa-Guerroro & de France, 2007). Te Hōhanga Reo inspired the Hawai’ian language nest movement after the founders of the Pūnana Leo travelled to New Zealand and visited the programs in person (Stiles, 1997). In 1984, the first Hawai’ian language nest began. Within three years, two more nests were opened (Chambers, 2015). By 1996, ‘Aha Pūnana Leo had served 175 children in nine different programs (Kamanā & Wilson, 1996). Pūnana Leo programs weave Indigenous and family-based ways of knowing with Montessori methods in early childhood education. (Wilson & Kamanā, 2001). I believe that Montessori methods of learning is a good way for children to learn the language, and to learn
anything in general. To learn the language, I believe it need to be done naturally, like playing with toys, cleaning up, and doing things that the children like to do. Children under the age of three are not able to attend the language nest due to state restrictions. A program called Hui Hu‘I pepe (baby embraces club) welcomes mothers with infants or toddlers up to the age three to join with the teacher to learn Hawai‘ian and simple teaching strategies to prepare the kids for when they are able to enter the language nest. (Wilson & Kamanā, 2001). I think this is great. I think that this kind of concept would be perfect for my community. Like I have stated before, our students know the language fairly well, while the parents do not know the language. This would not only benefit the children, but it would benefit the parents and the community as a whole. Children in the language nests learn literacy in Hawai‘ian from an early age due to the early establishment of an accepted orthography (Wilson & Kamanā, 2001). In Saskatchewan, for the Saulteaux language, there is not one official standard language. You will see some communities using standard roman orthography, while other communities will use modern roman orthography and some will just use the language phonetically. Our languages are not strong enough at this point in the community to worry about an orthography, the focus should be on oral pronunciation.

2.4.4 Onodawa’ga Wadehsaye Oiwa’sho’oh Seneca Language Nest

In 2009, Sandy Dowdy, a fluent Seneca speaker, started a program with her husband. (Borgia, 2014). Dowdy is a certified early childhood educator in Montessori and Asher’s Natural Approach teaching methods, including total physical response (TPR) (Borgia & Dowdy, 2010). Dowdy started the language nest with four three-year-old preschool children and three of her great granddaughters. By 2011, the number of participants in the language nest increased to 10
Dowdy’s nest day included spending time outside, using activities that followed the seasonal cycle, environmental sustainability and seasonal ceremonies (Borgia & Dowdy, 2010). These activities were available to the children when they were ready to partake in them. During the day the students would learn the language through non-verbal gestures, Total Physical Response (TPR) language teaching, repetition, and flashcards. Children learn about clothes, food, numbers, pets, commands, names, family terms, questions, observations, and songs (Borgia & Dowdy, 2010). This Seneca language nest is an innovative approach to language nest development and delivers the language in a way that blends traditional and western approaches to early language learning and child development (Chambers, 2015). I believe in this time and age, it is fair to say that our language nests would be hint of western ideology along with a lot of traditionalism, due to the fact that English is the dominant language wherever we go. Even in our own communities English dominates everything; the store, the community buildings, the signs on the roads are all in English. So, blending traditional and western approaches to language learning is not something that would be uncommon.

2.4.5 Sami Language Nests

The successes of the Māori and Hawai’ian language nest programs have encouraged programs to spread to Norway and Finland and inspired the Sami Indigenous people to start their own nest programs. In 1993, the Skolt Sami language nest was developed and, shortly after, the Inari Sami language, and then the Lule Sami language nest (Pasanen, 2010). There are nine different Sami languages or dialects (Todal, 2010). In 1997, two Inari Same language nests were opened in Inari and Ivalo in Finland (Pasanen, 2010). The Inari nest was funded by the Finnish Cultural foundation which supported two teachers and eight to ten children 3 to 6 years of age.
(Pasanen, 2004). The language was spoken in full immersion in Inari Sami throughout the day, and the only time the teachers were allowed to use Finnish was in the office. This was so the children could not see their teachers using a different language (Pasanen, 2004). To be able to do this in my community would be absolutely amazing, but with the lack of fluent speakers and resources, a Dowdy-style language nest might be of our best interests, for now. In current times, the language nest is still in operation, but the program is now funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and has expanded to employ three teachers and educate up to 12 children. In 1989, a group of four parents took the initiative to start a Lule Sami Daycare in Tysfjord. The other language nest in Bodø was started by a preschool teacher who is also a parent who wanted to bring the Lule Sami language into the daycare (Braut, 2010). These language nests came with many different conflicts, from parents wanting the nest to be only for children to speak in the Lule Sami language, and for those whose children did not speak the language (Braut, 2010). Eventually, the nest was open to all and was called “Here we shall speak Sami” where the Lule Sami language was strictly enforced (Braut, 2010). Other challenges included lack of curriculum materials in Lule Sami, and a possible result of this was Lule Sami songs and role play had a central role in the program (Braut, 2010). The language nest was modelled in a home-like environment and the employees were like the parents. Daily activities included teaching children about Sami traditional lifestyles, which meant spending time in nature as well as free play activities (Braut, 2010).

2.4.6 Kanawà:ke Mohawk Language Nest

In the 1980s, the first Indigenous language nest was created in Kanawà:ke territory in Quebec (Hoover, 1992). Data from Statistics Canada provided the Kahnawa’ke community with
the stats on their language, and they did not realize that their language was already in the state of accelerated language loss (Grembol & Whaley, 2006). As a result of this new awareness, the Mohawk language was introduced into the schools for 15 minutes, and eventually 30 minutes a day. It was realized that short periods of language learning were not enough time to sustain language renewal. Parents then started to look at different avenues of increasing language learning in the elementary schools (Hoover, 1991). In 1979, the Kanawà:ke Survival school opened, followed by the development of a full range immersion nursery school program (Grembol & Whaley, 2006). The program eventually expanded in kindergarten and then grade one as partial language immersion. In 1984, the partial language immersion grade one class became full day language immersion (Chambers, 2015). In the beginning, parents did not enroll their children in the school, but during the next 10 years the enrollment of students was over half of the children in the community (Richards & Burnaby, 2008). Parents’ worries about their children’s English language skills and future opportunities played a role in the slow enrollment at the immersion school. Research showed that Mohawk language immersion did not cost English language performance, which resulted in better enrolment (Hoover, 1992). Very little research has been published about the Kanawà:ke language nest program, even though it is Canada’s role lead in language nest programs. (Chambers, 2015).

2.4.7 Language Nest Programs in British Columbia

The Cseyseten (language nest) at Adam’s Lake is conducted in the Secwepeme language. The community used a traditional language nest model taking children from 6 weeks to 5 years old. The children leave the nest at 5 years of age and transition into an immersion school if parents choose. This program runs four days a week, from September to June (McIvor, 2006).
The Clao7alwe (Raven’s Nest) program at Lil’Wat Nation is conducted in the Lil’Wat language. In this program, they took a one-time intake of 3-6-year-olds who will move through the program together for four years. These children will eventually move into the 5- and 8-year-old program, which operates more like a one-room immersion school. This program runs five days a week from September to June each year. Both communities said the most important thing is to “just do it”, if this is something that a community wants done, they must do something to get it started and do not let anything stand in your way (McIvor, 2006). Both communities were able to get Elders to help them with the language nests, even though it was not easy to find Elders who were willing to commit to the program. Parents have been the driving force for both communities for getting the language nests started. Teachers in both of the communities who started out in the language nest were not fluent speakers, but had some background in education. They were matched with Elders who were traditional language speakers. They worked together with the children and made the nest work in a positive manner. Like other language nests, especially the Kanawa’ke language nest program the parents were worried that their children would not learn to read and write in the English language which would cause them not to succeed in the world (McIvor, 2006). Despite these worries, research shows that literacy skills learned in a mother tongue are transferable to second language (Danesi, 1988). Children are born to learn more than one language (Crystal, 1997).

2.5 Conclusion

Language nests have been said to build self-esteem in children, giving them pride in their language learning, and pride in their culture and identity. During one of McIvor’s (1998) studies on language nests in the classrooms, parents have said that their children had bigger world views,
that they were more in touch with the earth and more respectful. This goes back to the idea that our languages are gifts from the Creator. Language learning helps in building self-esteem and, in helping with building personal self-esteem for my children and other children through immersion learning, this process will also help with fostering a high collective self-esteem (Morcom, 2009). Collective self-esteem refers to how children feel about their ethnic heritage, family, and community. This way of building self-esteem both personally and collectively is essential for Indigenous children to flourish as self-sufficient individuals.

Chambers (2014), like other scholars who have studied language nests, says that family-based approaches to language nest development and delivery are a promising approach to developing and re-establishing emotional, mental, social, and cultural connections between young children and Elders. As one can see that all the positive outcomes besides language fluency development within children, there is a lot more that comes along with this process of language revitalization. It not only creates speakers of the language, but it creates a well-balanced holistic individual overall. Children are more aware of their traditional and cultural ways and their world views have opened (Chambers, 2003). In her study of two communities in British Columbia, McIvor (2006) stated that their children started to develop a cultural belief system, which was created by the Elders that taught them through storytelling in the language. They will have more appreciation for the history, songs, rituals and worldview of their culture and community (McIvor, 2005).
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Indigenous methodology

In this chapter, I will discuss what kind of methodological choices I have used to conduct my study. While researching and understanding my study, I had to keep in mind that though I am a student of a Western university, with Western styles of learning and ideology, I am first an Anihšināpē student, an Anihšināpē researcher, and an Anihšināpē person with a specific and distinctive worldview. Though I acknowledge and understand the importance of Western-style research, my research consists of Indigenous issues and should be treated with Western pedagogy when necessary, but mainly guided and supported by Indigenous knowledge and an Anihšināpē worldview. It was important for me as an Anihšināpē person to do and write my study using Indigenous methodology, not only because I am conducting Indigenous research, but to make sure I am doing things properly in regard to the Anihšināpē worldview.

During my study, I have used both Western and Indigenous knowledge methods that helped focus my research in an appropriate manner for Indigenous language revitalization. I used the qualitative approach, consistent with Western ideology and research methods, when necessary. Qualitative research addresses issues by using one of the following three approaches a) grasping the subjective meaning of issues from the perspectives of the participants, b) latent meanings of a situation are in focus, c) social practices and the life world of the participants are described (Flick, 2011). Qualitative research provides information about the “human” side of an issue – that is, the often-contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally-specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations.
While using this Western research method to the best of my ability, it was also imperative that I draw on Indigenize methodologies by using Indigenous knowledge as a base and a guide to my research.

During my study, I have kept my Anihšināpē lens on and made sure to do my research work in this manner. By this, I believe when we are working with Indigenous issues, such as language revitalization, we must go back to our knowledge keepers, our ceremonies, our language keepers, and our natural settings for our research to be successful. Without Indigenous knowledge for Indigenous research, there will be a missing link in everything. It would just be documentation without specific meaning pertaining to Anihšināpē worldview of Indigenous knowledge. It is necessary for myself as an Indigenous researcher to focus my study with an Anihšināpē worldview. As Hart (2010) states, worldviews affect our belief systems, decision making, assumptions, and modes of problem solving. Hart (2010) speaks about how researchers must understand both worldviews so they do not do more harm than good in their studies. Stonechild (2016) states that Indigenous people have a kinship to all things whether they be animate or inanimate, and the failure to apply this fundamental principle is the root of many modern problems. Having a connection to animate and inanimate beings is a huge part of Indigenous life. Having a connection to spirit through prayer and ceremony is likewise an important part of Indigenous life, so it is important to make prayer through ceremony a foundation of my study.

Wilson (2008) says that Indigenous research is ceremony. He compares Indigenous research to that of an actual ceremony that is conducted in Indigenous space, stating that the purpose of ceremony is to build a relationship between us and cosmos. Indigenous research is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into Indigenous life (Wilson,
2008). I have to agree with this because as an Anihšināpē woman growing up with culture, ceremony, and prayer as a basis for all things that I do in my life, my research also must be conducted in this way in order for me to be fully successful. If I do not include ceremony in my study, then will I be doing it properly? Will I be doing it with all that is important to me? No. I am in no way disregarding Western method, but instead including Indigenous knowledge and research because it is necessary for me to do my study. Kovach (2010) states that within Indigenous methodologies preparation may take many forms similar to Western research protocols, such as literature reviews and research design. But Indigenous research methodology also includes interpersonal and relational preparation, like participating in ceremony, or going back to the community (Kovach, 2010).

Throughout my study, I have utilized Kovach’s (2010) research framework, which was centered on plains Cree knowledge. Though our languages are different in many aspects, they are still very similar. The research framework that Kovach has described fits into my mentality and view of Indigenous research in more ways than one. While researching, thinking, and doing, I realized I was conducting a lot of these aspects in my research without awareness of Kovach’s framework. I realize I have been doing this because in Indigenous worldviews, our ways of doing things are similar, because we all strive to acknowledge the Creator and spirit in our work. With that I have utilized the framework in my research. The Indigenous research framework with Nēhiyaw epistemology comes with six characteristics. These characteristics include a) tribal epistemology, b) decolonizing and ethical aim, c) researcher preparations involving cultural protocols, d) research preparation involving standard research design, e) making meaning of knowledges gathered and f) giving back (Kovach, 2010)
3.2 Fieldwork

We always hear about how Indigenous languages are very important and we need to revitalize our languages as effectively as we can. So why aren’t we exploring immersion practices in our communities more widely? Keeping this consideration in mind, I have researched different avenues of creating an immersion model in my own home and in my own community that would be effective for language learning amongst my children and family. The immersion model that had attracted my attention was the language nest. The language nest model that was created among the Maori grandmothers in New Zealand in the 1980’s. I created a mini language nest in my home and my mothers’ home working with my two sons. They learned the language with my mother and myself, in the comfort of their own home and familiar surroundings, while living life just as they would any other day. The focus of language growth was predominantly geared towards my younger son, mainly because he was still in his early childhood years and language learning would be achieved at a more sufficient and successful rate. However, both of my sons gained valuable lessons and language learning from this experience. My study was not only to be based on language learning, but it was based on using our ceremonies and cultural ways as an important factor of language learning and lived experience. The mini language nest in my home not only brought us valuable learning as a family, but it has led the way for language revitalization for my community. The mini language nest was focused on during evenings and weekends in both homes. My initial research time was to take place during the summer months when work and school activities would not interfere with our nest, but this idea and plan fell through due to untimely matters. This obstacle did not stop us from creating our nest. During my study, I asked myself three important research questions:
1) How will language nests help my family and my community?

2) What are the challenges for using a language nest for Indigenous language revitalization?

3) How can Elders, lodges and homes be agents and sites of Indigenous language revitalization?

I strove to meet the answers to these questions within my specific time frame. These questions, addressed in the following chapters, did not only pertain to the learning that happened in my home, but they were also be the basis for language nest building and learning for my community as ceremonial lodges and Elders should be the foundation to all Indigenous learning.

Rather than language learning being taught in a linear atmosphere underpinned by Western ideology, language learning and teaching happened in a natural and holistic setting and in familiar environments. The participants engaged in everyday activities while using the language in all aspects of living. Language learning and teaching was conducted in a manner in which my sons were able to feel comfortable and language use was used naturally, rather than forced, as it sometimes can be in a classroom setting. Ceremony was a big part of this project, as it led the way in how the language nest was constructed and delivered throughout the project. The language nest was done during the evenings and weekends at home, on the road, shopping, at ceremony etc.

My goal throughout my study was to be able to answer my research questions in a clear and precise way.

3.3 Participants
When conducting my study, I was both the mother and the researcher. I found it necessary to be a part of my study, not only because my sons and my home were the main agents of my study, but because being an Indigenous researcher it is important for us to be a part of the research we do. It is important for Indigenous researchers to be responsible for the outcomes of what we are studying whether the outcomes are successful or not. Simply, we are a part of, rather than observants of the research. The other participants, besides myself, were my mother and my two sons. Even though my participants are my family members, consent and assent for this project had to be given. The participant consent and assent for my study was done in our homes, this consent and assent was mandated to ensure that my research was done properly, and that my children agreed with the study and were also given a choice in doing language revitalization work, as was my mother. We conducted a mini language nest which allowed for only the Saulteaux language to be spoken in both my home and my mother’s home. The intention of this study was to use an immersion practice to revitalize the language in natural settings and in a holistic manner. Other participants included lodge keepers and Elders for specific ceremony held for this study, but they were not to be directly linked to the data collection. I needed my mother and my sons to be the participants for this study because I highly believe in order for us to be successful in language revitalization, it must start at the home, within our own walls, with our own family members, and then we can expand it out into our community.

I believe that practicing language revitalization at home shows that it has more meaning and commitment. How can we attempt to revitalize a language in the community, when we do not practice it at home? In using my own family in my research, this allowed me to personalize my goal and to start language revitalization with the people closest to me, my children. Being a participant in my own study allows me to be involved in and experience the learning as it takes
place. I used Weber-Pillwax’ (2001) notion that in Indigenous methodology the researcher is allowed to be who they are while being actively engaged in the research process. Though I am the researcher for this study, I am first of an Anihšināpē mother, who is teaching her children their language, along with their Nōhkōmis.

Being involved in your own research, is not only walking your talk, but it is allowing you as the researcher to gain more knowledge in this experience and to transform yourself into what you are learning (Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Being able to transform yourself into your research, allows your research to bring a whole new meaning to what your study entails, again giving it more meaning. Being involved in the mini language nest we have created allowed me to view life from a language angle, that our language should be used at all times, rather than advancing the colonial way of thinking in an English dominated society where the English language is the main tongue we should be using. Being able to be a part of the research as the researcher and participant will allow me to utilize knowledge gained. It is my duty as the researcher and Mother/participant to put knowledge gained into use, not only for my family but for my community.

As stated earlier, creating a mini language nest immersion model for my family was not only intended for family use, but also to model an immersion practice for the rest of my community, and other First Nation communities. Wilson (2008) states that in Indigenous research it is our responsibility as researchers to fulfill relationships with the world around us. In Indigenous research, we do these studies not only to gain knowledge for oneself but also keeping in mind all Indigenous people and communities. Wilson (2008) compares life to ceremony, as in a sweat lodge you may hear participant say “all my relations” after saying a prayer. He speaks about our research being as such. When doing research, it is our responsibility to gain knowledge
for everyone and not just ourselves. It is our responsibility to be accountable for “all of our relations” (Wilson, 2001). It is my responsibility as a mother, a language keeper, a community member and an Indigenous researcher to do my best in revitalizing our language. Again, it must start at home, with my sons and mother.

3.4 Procedure and protocols

Going back to Kovach’s (2009) framework, when speaking about tribal epistemology, it is doing things in a proper and meaningful way through an Anihšināpē worldview. This means that in order to create something that is useful, there are certain protocols that must be maintained before starting something, including Indigenous research. I made sure that I used our ways of life through culture. Ceremony and prayer were apparent throughout my study, with the consideration of my family’s and community’s needs. In doing Indigenous research for Indigenous matters, it is important that we focus our study and research in a way that carries and supports our Anihšināpē lens. Our worldviews, our teachings, our ceremonies must be the basis of what we do in our research. Certain protocols must be conducted in order to have a concise and valuable outcome. Though we have to consider what is needed by ethic boards from the university and fulfill their requirements, we must as Indigenous researchers keep in mind of our own ethical expectations. We need to ask ourselves questions about what is sacred, what can be shared, and whether or not protocol has taken place if we are working with Elders and ceremonies.

Before the initial language nest had taken place, we used ceremony as a means of creating guidance for this project, and ensuring that things will be done in an effective and proper manner. In using proper protocol, I gifted a lodge keeper with cloth and tobacco and
asked him for prayers to ensure a good outcome and to have good experiences throughout the research. In everything that I do in my life, prayer is my main objective, with the Creator anything is possible. Ceremony and language go hand in hand, which made it important for me to go to a lodge keeper and ask for guidance, otherwise it would feel as though I’m just doing another less meaningful project. We have to understand as Indigenous researchers that we must go back to our ceremonies, to prayer and to spirit to guide us in important matters. Gourrette’s call for radical Indigenism, explains that when an Indigenous researcher does their research they do not omit these important elements of traditional knowledge. Using spirit, dream and traditional knowledge in one’s study is imperative to Indigenous research (Gourrette, 2005).

Language is our life; our culture and it makes us distinctive from other people. I found it imperative that I used ceremony and our ways of life as a basis of my research. Without using who we are in all aspects of our life, whether it be professionally, academically, socially or personally, there will always be a missing connection to our purpose. Accepting and acknowledging Indigenous worldviews in Indigenous research will allow us as researchers to fit our everyday life into our research. Therefore, it was important for me to use ceremony as a part of my study because ceremony is a major concept and practice that is used in my world.

Hart (2010) states that while working with Elders in his research, they used their Cree ways of helping and part of those ways of helping included the use of ceremonies, which developed insight and connection to his work. This is precisely what ceremony is used for in my life, hence should also be a part of my research and study. In doing this, I ask for guidance through ceremony and lodge, preparing my research journey the best way I knew how. To be able to be a researcher, researching Anihšināpē matters, such as language revitalization, I believe there must be meaning and purpose behind everything that we do. We must situate ourselves in
our work and research so we don’t forget what we are doing and why we are doing it. If we can’t situate ourselves in our work, then what is the purpose? Will we be successful? Would it be meaningful?

3.5 Ethical considerations and standards

The research design that I have chosen for my study was imperative for Indigenous method, and for Indigenous research. It was conducted within the university’s expectations of the required ethics and consent and assent that had to take place before the research was conducted. My research design was also influenced and guided by my academic supervisor, who encouraged me to use different avenues to help me reach my research goals throughout this study. Though I was guided through academics, I also used what I had already learned about certain protocols and cultural understanding of how I should use ceremony and the Anihšināpē worldview in my study.

Before the initial study and data collection was to take place, I had to create letters of consent and assent for both of my sons and for my mother. These letters of consent were approved by the board of ethics at the University of Regina and, once those were completed and approved, I then took the letters of consent to my mother at her home, and to my sons in my home. I read the letters of consent to them and asked them for their participation in this study, reading to them in a way that they would understand in their young lives. Though my participants are my family members, it was imperative that they understood that they could leave the study whenever they wanted to, or that they did not have to participate in it if they did not want to (see Appendices A and B).
Once the letters of consent and assent were done and signed, I had a small meeting with my mother and sons about when we would start our mini language nest. Since our initial times of the language nest were altered due to untimely matters, we had to plan when and where to meet. During this small meeting we also discussed how I would be collecting the data through audio and visual recording, picture taking, and field writing as expressed in the consent forms. We decided that we would conduct the mini language nest in both of our homes, in the car, while grocery shopping, and at ceremony as these are the things we do and are committed naturally in our lives. Although we set days and times of when the data collection was to take place, these times and language learning were not staged. Everything was done naturally in everyday life. To do this sufficiently without the distraction of other things in our lives such as work and school, we used evenings and weekends to create our mini language nests.

Yes, through Western academia, we are mandated to ensure consent is given by the participants and that these consent forms are accepted and approved by the ethics board at the university. This procedure is done for liability purposes and so there in no undermining of ethical circumstances for the participants involved. This approach is good but in accordance with Indigenous methodology, ethical practices and considerations are already instilled into the research base. It is our duty as Indigenous researchers to use certain protocol and understandings of distinctive worldviews in our research. It is our duty to build relationships not only with our participants, surroundings, and communities, but to do things out of respect, insight, and open mindedness.

While starting my study, I needed guidance in the way that I knew best which was through ceremony and knowledge keeper guidance. I felt that I was stepping into something that I needed significant help with because language revitalization is much more than teaching words
and phrases to students in a classroom. As Elders have stated, language has a spirit, along with everything else. This is the Anihšināpē worldview. In getting my children involved in my study, it was not only my duty to get them to consent to this study for the university, but it was my duty as an Anihšināpē mother to do things properly through ceremony and to seek Elder guidance for our language efforts. We were not just doing this research to gain academic credit, but to gain Indigenous knowledge in a holistic and meaningful way not only for my family but for all Indigenous people who seek language revival and revitalization. In her writing, Kovach (2010) stresses the idea of giving back. What this means is that once we accomplish important or significant goals in our lives, we are assumed to “give back” for our accomplishments (Kovach, 2010). This practice is valid in my way of thinking and the way I was raised in Anihšināpē life. It is our responsibility to give back to our families, communities and ci manito for all that we are successful in. In my study, my way of giving back to ci manito and to the people, is to role model and encourage ways of language revitalization. I could not have done this without the participation of my mother, my sons, and my academic supervisor.

3.6 Data collection and methods

Some methods of data collection that I used in my study included “close observation” which is when the researcher is observing but also a participant of the study. Van Manen states that the best way into a person’s life world is to participate in it (cited in Bjorbækmo & Engelsrud, 2011). This type of study allows the researcher to write about what they have experienced in their research, rather than what they have observed in their research. It goes hand in hand with what I have stated earlier from Weber & Pillwax (2001) where you are able to transform yourself into that which you are observing. Though I was an active participant in my
study, I also did a lot of observing of interactions between my mother and my sons, and between myself and my sons or myself and my mother. Observations took place anywhere and everywhere, and with the use of “close observation” it made it easier to do my journaling because I was a part of it all, rather than just being an observer. After each day of our mini language nest, I also used field notes as a source of journaling. This kind of record keeping allowed me to measure the success of language learning for that particular day; what worked well and what did not work well in language learning for that day or time. Using my field notes allowed me to expand on the language learning through different avenues and different times and day activities. Besides using field notes, I used pictures that I took during our language nest times. These pictures allowed me to reflect on certain times, days, and experiences of language learning. I also did interviews with my mother (recorded and unrecorded) about the importance of language revitalization, her wishes and her determination on language revival. These recordings were conducted both through video and audio. I was able to use these interviews as data sources and reference them throughout my study. Some of the questions I asked my mother while interviewing her were:

- What were your thoughts on language in the community?
- As a parent (grandparent) what were your hopes, dreams, goals of language learning in the home?
- Would you have made any changes in your decisions about language use in the past?
- How do you see the relationship between ceremony and language learning?
- What are your thoughts about language nests and their use for language revitalization?

I asked these questions in the beginning of my study, and then again re-asked similar or the same questions at the end of the study to see if anything had changed or to see if her thoughts
about language revitalization has changed through the use of the mini language nest (see Appendix C for a complete list of my interview questions).

The close relationship I have with my participants made the data collection a lot easier, as I did not have to spend so much time building relationships with my participants as most researchers would have to do in a study such as this. Relationship-building is important for all researchers to conduct while doing this kind of work, especially while working in Indigenous communities. Though our relationships were close, the mini language nest that we have created for ourselves did make our relationships with one another that much closer.

During one of the language nest sessions, I interviewed my Mother through audio and visual aids in both my home and her home. These interviews were both conducted in the Saulteaux language and in the English language. I later transcribed these recordings into a word document so I could refer to the interviews during my data collection. I also took pictures of my children engaged in speech and activity with my Mother during language use. In doing this, it allowed me to reflect on the day and what was successful or not so successful in language learning for that day.

During my study I also found it important to use the conversational method throughout my data collection. In using the conversational method, this allows the researchers to collect information through story telling. Honoring orality in research not only brings the participants and the researcher a significant relationship, it acknowledges a holistic and natural way of collecting data. In my data collection, it was important for me to use my mother’s stories about language and worldview in the study. I also used stories of my own throughout my study as a means for people to understand where I am coming from. Our stories set the foundation and understanding of why there was a need for language immersion practices need to take place.
Stories remind us about how things were learned and taught in a holistic manner, with family and everyday surroundings.

As one can see, I have used different data collection methods throughout my study. I chose methods that I believed would allow us to see how the language use in our homes was successful, and also to see our not-so-successful days of language usage. By reviewing my data, it allowed me to remedy any areas that were not so sufficient in language learning and use and try to use different procedures, and activities that would allow the speakers and learners to participate more smoothly in their learning environment.

3.7 Data interpretation

Though my participants are my close family members, it was still important for me to reflect on my data collection, vigorously in search of common results and themes in the language learning. Though my family was my participants for this project, this did not influence the way I collected and analyzed my data collection. While interpreting my data, I used Clandinin and Connelly’s (2006) check points to enhance my study findings. These checkpoints were based on three categories, which were:

- **Temporality**: that the events that were under study were in transition, meaning that before and during the study, all the learning, events, participants and objects had a past, a present and a future.
- **Sociality**: where social and personal conditions are important, and this also studies the relationship between the researcher and the participants.
- **Place**: the different places that the mini language nest had taken place and the time.
Using these check points allowed me to interpret my findings in a more effective manner. I looked for commonalities, connections, themes and patterns in the language learning. While doing this, I considered all avenues for language learning. I asked myself questions like: Where was language learning and use more successful? Was there a certain theme to language learning? Was there a pattern? All of this was collected and interpreted through the data collection I have used, keeping in mind the three check points suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2006).

3.8 Conclusion

As an Anihšināpē woman and researcher, it is important for me to follow through with certain criteria for doing Indigenous research. This is just as important for me to follow through with certain criteria and pedagogy for western academics. In some instances, putting together a research document of our way of life could be challenging because we just do it when it is our everyday living. It is sometimes hard to document our worldviews when we are so accustomed to just doing it in our everyday lives, I guess this is what makes Indigenous methodology and western methodology distinctive. It is important for us to use Indigenous method while attaining effective solutions to Indigenous problems because some things just can’t be accomplished in other ways to that of Indigenous life and thought. As a language teacher in my community school, I am doing my best to revitalize our language in a linear atmosphere. Teachers of other subjects love their classrooms, filled with resources of all kinds, while language teachers are struggling to maintain, retain and revitalize a language because of the way it is being taught in the classroom. We need these studies using an Indigenous methodology to be conducted so our results can be more meaningful and accomplished. We can research Indigenous issues just as another non-Indigenous issue, but I believe we will find ourselves either going in circles, or back
to square one. Indigenous methodologies are imperative for Indigenous research. Our ways, our lives, our worldviews are distinctive, and should be acknowledged as such.
4.1 Introduction

I come from a community where the people identify themselves as Saulteaux and/or Cree. Though the community identifies themselves as such, our Indigenous language use in the community is very low. According to the data from Statistics Canada, the use of our language in the community is five people (Statistics Canada, 2016). Our community secondary students tend to know more of their Indigenous language than their parents or grandparents do because they can learn their language in the community school. I think it is great that the students are learning their language, but it is insufficient for reclaiming language when it is only used at school and not in the homes. In most cases, students do not use their language at home because they have no one else to speak it with and their parents are too discouraged to learn. As a language teacher, I have researched different avenues of teaching the language so it could be out in the community more and I have come to realize that one of the most successful ways of language revitalization and retention is to be immersed in the language. In researching different immersion practices for language revitalization, I came across the language immersion model that originated in New Zealand among the Maori known as the language nest.

I believe that for a nation to be successful, we must first be successful at home. Being successful at home means using the language at home. Given that, as stated in earlier chapters, I decided to create a mini language nest in my home involving my mother, my two sons and myself. This would not only be me walking my talk, but it would also discipline me with my language use in my own household. My study and research were not only intended to mimic immersion models that have been successful in other parts of the world, but also to build confidence in others who are seeking to revitalize their mother tongues. This chapter will focus
on the findings of my research as it appeared in my home. This chapter is organized into three sections 1) My feelings and worries about the language nest study; 2) Challenges of the language nest and 3) Successes and outcomes of the language nest.

4.2 My feelings and worries about the language nest

While in either my home or my mother’s home, we tried to use the language as naturally as we could. We visited, cooked, cleaned, played, and drove our vehicles to town, always speaking in the language. We usually did this in the evenings and on the weekends. It became apparent to me while looking through my daily journals that the language use in our homes worked best if my Mother and sons were doing an activity together, such as making supper or playing a game. This is because, naturally, my sons would not spend much of their time playing or hanging around with the adults in the house. Even if the children were doing their own activities, language was still used so my sons were still hearing the language even if indirectly. During an activity, though, they had to communicate in the language to the best of their abilities. So, once I determined this, we used different activities that engaged and interested my sons.

Figure 1: Nōhkomis talking
In the beginning of our mini language nest, my sons were hesitant, shy and out of their comfort zones. Looking through my journal accounts and seeing how many times my sons have been hesitant and uncomfortable in using the language, I began to recognize just how limited in the language I had made my sons. The following excerpt from my journal captures some of my concerns:

My sons are just not taking to the language, they are shy, uninterested or uncomfortable speaking the language. What can we do to overcome this? What do we need more of? This is my fault. Why are my sons having a hard time with language learning? (Journal Entry, Sept 10, 2018)

I immediately became sad at what I had done to my children by not exposing them to the language more often and my journal entries from that week show a lot of my sadness. My sons seemed uncomfortable and did not want to speak back to us in the language. In reviewing my
journal entries, it was in every language nest meeting that my sons were shy and uncomfortable with the language. So, I had to think of other ways to get my children comfortable in using the language. The following entry from my journal shows when I began trying to find ways to improve their motivation:

My sons are still not taking to the language, this is getting a bit frustrating. What can we do to get my sons interested? maybe play games, maybe just allow them to hear the language first instead of expecting them to answer back in the language. It is ok, it will get better (Journal entry, September 14, 2018)

After this entry is when we started playing games which required my sons to respond back in Saulteaux. The more we kept doing these activities, the more comfortable my sons became in using the language. My sons started using the language a bit more with each other, whether it was using little words, mimicking each other, or mimicking my mother and myself. We would use the language while we were in the car, travelling to go shopping or we would use the grocery store, and we would use it at ceremony through prayer and song.

During the language nest time, I did my best to be optimistic about this whole study, and told myself that even though the work was hard, it was also very necessary and rewarding. I have made several accounts in my journal, writing about what was both encouraging and discouraging in this study. The ultimate goal that I kept coming back to was that just learning the language and knowing the language would be the reward in itself. In an interview, I spoke to my mother about my negative feelings. In our exchange, she reminded me of the following points:

My girl, it’s okay if the boys are not speaking the language right away, they are hearing it, and that is a lot more than they were doing last year, or even last month for that matter. They will get it, we just have to keep speaking it, and they will listen…give it some time” (Grandmother)
Having discussions with my mother about not using the language all the time with my children from birth also brought out that I may have thought damage was done to their learning. My mother made it clear, though, that they were now learning the language, and that this should be the main focus. Though sometimes the feelings of discouragement still arose, I tried to be more optimistic than discouraged.

Even though I tried to remain positive throughout the study, I believe that my frustrations over the set times for the language nest was a big downfall in terms of my optimism, simply because we were still setting times and having limited language nest times. My language nest had originally been planned as a summer activity but was delayed by the speed of the research ethics board review. In the end, my nest began at the end of the summer and carried on into the fall. Making the language nest only on evenings and weekends seemed to be harder than being fully immersed in the language for a month or two consistently. Despite my feelings of discouragement, my optimism would set in again, and I would think to myself, “at least my sons are hearing the language, and somewhat communicating in the language.” Or I would remind myself “at least my sons were hearing the language and spending a lot of time with their grandmother and learning from her.” Then I realized that I still had that western way of thinking. I was limiting myself to using Saulteaux during these planned times when, in fact, the language
could be used all the time, even if it was just me at home with the boys. My very intention was to create a language nest so we could be immersed in the language and, as easy as it may sound, it was not easy. Language learning is still a tough task to fulfill for the fact that we are in an English-dominated society, even in our First Nations communities, shopping centers, stores, and schools. It was difficult to use the language constantly because I became so accustomed to using our foreign language in everything that I do.

When I would find the use of the English language being used in the homes, this would become very discouraging to me, but we always found a way to carry on. In looking back on my journal accounts it became apparent to me that, with the English dominance, some days a lot of language use in the mini language nest was limited. I felt that I did not get adequate amount of Saulteaux language use in the home. I had to keep reminding myself that my sons were now hearing the language much more than before. In the beginning of my study, I went into it thinking that, because we are Saulteaux and we know the language and Saulteaux is our mother tongue, creating a mini language nest would be easy, fun and consistent. I was full of confidence and determination, only to find that using our language in this modern-day society is tougher than it seems. Language revitalization is one of the hardest things to do, even if you have fluency, even if you are passionate about it, and even if you know how important and precious this is to accomplish.

Self-talk was one of my main strategies to counter my feelings of frustration. Self-talk made it so I could persevere, even when I felt very discouraged. Self-talk, a lot of reflecting in my journal entries, and having conversations with my mother about the language nest and about language in general kept me going with the study. As I have said before, I thought that having all of the tools, the resources, and the language would make my study an easy one, but I was wrong.
No matter how we look at it, if language has not been used since the day of birth, then language work will be hard. In the beginning of the study, I had more discouraging days than positive days. This was because I had a different idea of how the language nest would function set in my mind before it actually happened. So, a lot of self-reflecting, self-reassuring and a lot of encouragement from my academic supervisor and my mother became my motivation to keep on going. I needed to keep my mind sane, and I needed to keep my mind open for different possibilities and to have a different outlook as to what the mini language nest was to look like.

4.3 Challenges of the language nest

Throughout the study I was faced with some different challenges along the way. Some of these challenges were so intense that it made me want to stop the study all together. It could have been because I had a different idea of how the language nest should take place, as to how it really took place and how it was taking course. It was a very emotional experience in some cases, and I was reminded often of what I had done in not teaching my children their language since birth. Language loss and language revitalization are very emotional issues for me. I believe because our languages and cultures make us who we are as Indigenous people and, for as long as I can remember, language has been a fight in most Indigenous communities.

We always hear about intergenerational trauma and the effects of colonial impacts on Indigenous life. I grew up believing that even though my father attended residential school, because my mother used her language since birth, my family was not impacted too hard by intergenerational trauma. It could have been that I did not want to believe that this could happen to my family, or it was because the language was still alive, or it could be that I believed it should not have happened because the language is still stronger than for other members of our
family. This experience of conducting the study made me realize the language trauma I was dealing with. Fighting to retain the language for my children, and fighting to make our language a priority in our everyday lives has been a true eye opener. I will now discuss the challenges I was faced with, I walked in and faced them, I was walked through them. I fell down, but I got back up and continued on. Nothing worth having is ever easy.

4.3.1 Resistance

Being able to teach your children their language in the comfort of their own home or their grandmother’s home, along with her help, should be easy right? It sounds easy enough. I was hit with a dose of reality when we started our mini language nest. My children were not as enthusiastic about it as I was. They loved the fact that they were able to spend more time at their grandparents’ house and could help make bannock and other meals with their Grandmother, and they loved the fact that we were doing these things together. The use of Saulteaux in such a big context was out of their norm. Instead of being proud of their language, they were shy and uncomfortable with using the language. The boys did not mind if my mother or I used the language around them but it was hard for them to grasp at first and it was hard for them to reply because this was all so new to them. The boys seemed worried that they would make mistakes if they attempted to use the language. They had no confidence when using the language, and I believe they did not care whether they were learning their language or not. They just wanted to do things they did typically without the struggle of learning their language.

4.3.2 Time restraints
Finding time was a reoccurring issue throughout the duration of my study. My initial time frame for creating a mini language nest in my home was supposed to be one full month, which was to take place during the summer months. This would have been an opportune time for us to do the nest because of our busy schedules, such as school and work. The plan fell through due to time restraints with the University. I was unable to get my proposal in on time, which would have allowed me to create the mini language nest during the summer months. Life in general and unforeseen circumstances have also been a big part of the time restraints in the language nest. Throughout the study I have lost many loved ones, and this is something that I have had to deal with, and where language learning may have been put aside again for the time being. Colonialism has impacted our lives so much that it gives us the time to put our language learning aside at times to deal with other things; such as taking care of other family members, dealing with addictions, and attending wakes and funerals. Our languages are in such a dire need that when other eventful things happen in our lives, our languages do not come along with those priorities but get pushed aside again for a while until everything has calmed down.

When the mini language was in my home, where there were fewer visitors, the use of Saulteaux was more apparent because it was always just my sons, my mother and me in the house. All the electronics were turned off and there was no loud television blaring with English in the background. Even though we were immersed in the language, my sons would eventually grow tired of doing everything in the language. Language nests are meant to be done naturally in your homes, but we found that even though we were at home, we quickly ran out of things to do. It seemed that because of our limited times for our language nest and because my mother was not staying in the home with us, we again were running on scheduled times. My sons would get bored; they wanted to play and do other things. They wanted to go outside and ride their bikes.
(without us) or they wanted to watch television and play on their electronics that were all in the English language. It was hard to keep them entertained while using the language because we were not constantly doing things like cooking, or cleaning, folding laundry or playing with cars and other toys.

My initial thought of creating a mini language nest was to have my mother move into the house with us during the summer months, but due to time delays within the university, our nest had to be on evenings and weekends. I felt that instead of having a home life where the language could come naturally, we were in a staged atmosphere, searching for different ways to engage the children. I believe if my mother had the opportunity to move into our house with us, the language could have been used in every aspect, from the time my sons woke up to when they went to bed. Instead, because I had to work during the day and my son had to go to school, this was not possible. I became very discouraged, frustrated, and defeated when I thought about all the mishaps that happened during our language nest. My sons wanted to watch television, play on their iPads, go to the movies or do other things besides hanging out with mom and nōhkōmiš all the time.

My sons took to the language a bit today, but grew tired of it again. They wanted to go and ride their bikes outside. I don’t think it would be a good idea if mom and I tried to go and ride bikes with them haha! They also want to watch TV or play on their electronics during our time together with the language. Our tvs and electronics are not in Saulteaux. ENGLISH ENGLISH ENGLISH?” (Journal entry, Sept 19, 2018)

Everything that they wanted to do had to do with the English language, so I thought.

So, we then focused our mini language nest on the evenings and weekends, which were both in my home and my mother’s home doing whatever else we had planned for that day, whether we would be travelling to ceremony, going to a powwow, or grocery shopping. The set time to create the language nest was good to a certain extent because my sons were now being immersed in the language, which hadn’t been done before, so I figured that we could slowly get
them used to being around the language for long periods of time at home. We would set a certain amount of time after school to either go to my mother’s house or my house. On weekends, we tried to spend most of the day together, again either at my mother’s house or at my house. Sometimes, our times would be affected because of other obligations, and we were set to cut the time shorter. I found that the evenings and weekends were not as ideal as a full month of language nesting during the summer, but at least the language was being used. Evenings and weekends were a lot more time spent using the language than before the study had happened, so I was happy about this.

4.3.3 English Dominance

I am a Saulteaux language teacher for my own community, and things seem to go by smoothly in the classroom, likely because it is set up like any other class with specific lessons and a certain scheduled time. This is a perfect concept to use for introducing the basics of a language but this model does not create fluent speakers. So, when I started my study it was to bring more immersion models into the communities, which is what families need. I did not realize how much work it would be. I believed that things would run smoothly, and the kids would take to it right away because they were going to be immersed in the language. In reality, there were times I walked away from our evening of language immersion feeling defeated. I felt defeated because we live in an English-dominated society. Even our homes, where we are lucky enough to have fluent speakers of Saulteaux, we are immersed in the English language, rather than our own Indigenous language.

I found that, even though we had every intention of using the language constantly, it was almost impossible to exclude the English language. We have become so accustomed to using this
foreign language that when something started to get a bit overwhelming, we would default to the common language, English. I was guilty of doing this also. Our language nest setting was a part of this hardship also. When we would have the nest at my mother’s, not everyone in the home was on board with the language nest. This meant that they went about their lives just as they would any other day, speaking English, and watching television where the programs were also in English. There would be times when someone from the family would walk through the house and they would start speaking to my mother in English and, instead of her answering them in Saulteaux, she would answer them in English. This became very frustrating to me. I wrote about this in my journal:

Today was a very frustrating day for me. I feel totally lost, discouraged and sad. I feel like I am in this language learning alone, and no one seems to care about it the same way I do. We were in the midst of our language nest, and there was so many people coming in and out of my mom’s house, just speaking in English, with no regard for what I am trying to do or promote. It is not a good day. I walked away defeated and in tears. What am I doing?”
(Journal entry. September 19, 2018)

The feelings of frustration were hard at this time. I also texted with my supervisor about this situation and my frustration:
I wanted my mini language nest to be perfect and for only our language to be used. This was not the case. What I learned is that if everyone is not on board for the language nests, the English language will always surface. We have become so accustomed, so colonized to English being our normal language that we use every single day. Indeed, this very thesis is written in the English language.

4.4 Successes of the language nest
Once I stopped the pity party and thinking that my mini language nest was not going the way I planned or assumed it would, I started to change my way of thinking. I talked these feelings over with my mother at the time:

Mom: As long as the kids are having fun my girl and learning and hearing the language, everything will be okay. If they feel you being down and negative about language learning, then they won’t want any part of it either”

Denise: I know mom, I am starting to realize this now. As long as we get language in, and as long as they are hearing it as much as possible…. they will get it

Mom: kêkêt (true)

Though the time with my mother was valuable for both my sons and me, I found that I had to do my own language work at home with my children. Whether my mother was in the house with us or not, the language still had to be used. Whether it was morning time, nighttime, in the middle of the day, going to the store or bath time, the language still had to be used. My mini language nest moved from a scheduled time, to using the language whenever possible and wherever possible.

After my disappointment the other day in my language nest, I have come to realize, that language work is hard, no matter where we are. Especially in the world we live in today. I realize I would have to be far away in the bush with no electronics or people who want to speak English to have a fully immersed language nest. I have come to terms that I will not get the language nest I wanted, but I will get the language work that my sons and I need. I have to stop depending on my mom to make this right, and instead value her words, her teachings and her language use. I need to step up and make language learning mine, and use it in my own home, even if mom is not there. Creator help me. (Journal Entry, September 22, 2017)

I finally let go of the thought that just the Saulteaux language was going to be present, and accepted that the English language would still be around. Instead of making language-learning a task, I shifted my perspective and tried to make it natural. No matter how badly I wanted this study to be nothing but immersion, I came to realize that it was impossible to do this
due to our lifestyles. We either went to work or we went to school where the English language was a constant presence. If we wanted to watch a movie together as a family, it would be in the English language. I finally concluded that in order to be fully immersed in the Saulteaux language, we would have to live away from civilization, away from electronics, away from stores or anything that used the English language, and that meant that we could not go to work or to school either. Once I wrapped my head around this reality, I started to work with what I had. Language learning in a home with sons who were so used to the English language that they were not confident in using their own language, and got bored very easily of our staged learning atmosphere had to change.

I was also guilty of using the English language naturally, more so than my Saulteaux language. So, I needed to make a language plan for myself and for my sons so that the language could be used all the time throughout the day, and not only during the mini language nest allotted time. I spent time researching various at home language learning tools. I found that the key to being successful in language learning was to have patience and to have fun, as well as to realize that some language use was better than no language use at all in our homes. I had to stop thinking about all the things that I thought were wrong with my mini language nest and start to appreciate that this was indeed happening. Whether it was happening the way I had pictured it to happen, language immersion was apparent. My children were hearing it, they were involved in it and they were learning.

To change my way of thinking, I had to understand that even though my mother could not be with us from sun-up to sundown, the language could still be present. I, as a mother, had to make it my responsibility to teach my sons their language. I had to take put aside my research way of thinking and put on my mother hat and do what was right for my children. Even though it
would have been easier for my own mother to be there, I had to do this also in our home, from morning to bedtime. I decided that I would use the language as much as I could when I remembered to. Using our language was harder than anticipated when we had become so accustomed to using the English language in everything we do. I had to start thinking of our language use at home as not just something for my research, but also as our new way of life. I used the language as much as I could and hoped that my sons would eventually respond back to me in the language but, for now, at least they were hearing it more often. Language use was hard because of our use of the dominant language, so I had to think of ways to make our language more alive, more present, more important. So, I used at-home learning tools, such as labelling our home in the language, that would remind us to use the language. Until language use became natural, this needed to be done. I needed it to be visible as a reminder to us to shift from English to Saulteaux.

4.4.1 Teaching tools in my home

Now that we had the language up and around the house, I needed to do more that would encourage the kids to like using our language and want to do more of it. Again, I researched more language tools that would fit into our home and language learning. Instead of just doing things like cooking and cleaning, we started to tell stories of my mother’s past in the language or we would tell the kids everything that we did that day in the language. They would sit and listen, without many comments back.

So, we decided to start playing different language games with the kids, games they liked, such as bingo. In doing so, the kids were learning different subjects in the language, such as verbs, feelings, activities, and weather conditions. For them to win the game they had to say
“pahkinake” (I win) to claim a prize. The boys enjoyed playing this game. We also played things like *Go fish*, in the language, which they both enjoyed. Using games and stories to engage the boys seemed to be working to a certain extent. I started to buy animal and number puzzles to become more engaged with my youngest son. In the following excerpt, I document my nest planning:

I bought the boys some puzzles for counting and learning animals today, I hope they will learn with these. I hope these encourage them to use the language more…at the point I will use anything to get them interested (Journal entry, September 21, 2017)

We would do the puzzles in the language, learning the different wild animals and farm animals. While playing with these things, I would ask my youngest son “*awēnēn owē?*” (who is this?) with no response back, so I would then go through the animals by myself and pretend to forget what some of the animals were, and he would answer me in the language and tell me what they were in Saulteaux. He would laugh so hard because he found it hilarious that I forgot how to say the animal’s names, or so he thought. I also did this with colors, shapes and numbers. It was little strategies like this that I had to use to determine if he was learning the language. To my delight, I found that he was. The following journal entry shows my satisfaction at his progress:

I had to trick my baby son into speaking Saulteaux today! And to my surprise he actually knew what I was talking about. It was nothing big, but it was big for us, big for our family. I pretended not to know what the animals were on the puzzles, he thought it was hilarious that I didn’t know…so he corrected me! By using the language!!!!... I am so happy! It was a good day today! Ci mîkwêc (Journal Entry, September 2017)

When he got the words right, I would praise him by clapping my hands and saying “*minō tōtam*” (good job). He appreciated this praise and encouragement a lot. When he saw that his brother was using the language, he would use the language more often. Their motivation and
success were contagious between them. For my younger son, his older brother’s language
learning played a big role in his language learning.

4.4.1.1 Labeling my home in the language

I started to make the language visible in my home. This was not so much so the children
could learn to read and write it, but so that they would see it every day and would be encouraged
to use the language more. I wrote about this day in my journal:

Today I made labels to put up around our home. These are done to remind me that we
should be using the language rather than English. Even I have a hard time to use the
language all the time. I am putting the labels up, not to teach my sons to read and write in
the language, but instead to remind them of what we should be doing/ speaking instead…I
believe this will help us, and will work for us. (Journal entry, September 21, 2017)

I did this to signal to my sons that our language was important and valued in our home. This idea
came from the linguistic landscape theory. This research tells us that the languages we see in
print around us give information about a neighborhood and signals what languages are prominent
and valued in public and private spaces and the social positioning of people who identify with
the languages (Dagenais et al., 2009). I used this approach not only to encourage my children to
use the language, but this was also to remind myself that I needed to use the language as much as
possible with my children. I created language labels and put them in the appropriate areas
throughout the house. For instance, at the main door, I put labels up that read things like “niwî
mâcă šikwa” (I am going to leave now), or in the kitchen labels like “kinôntêskatê na?” (are you
hungry?). These types of labels were all over the house (see Figure X) and they stayed there
until I did not need them to remind me to use the language anymore.
Soon after, my sons started to acknowledge the labels and tried to use these words in their speech even if they did not know how to read what was written. This learning tool helped a lot because it helped me to remember to use the language. I was not only speaking the language verbally, but my sons could also see the language all over their home and they knew that the language was expected once they walked into the different rooms. My partner also started to try and learn the language, bit by bit. He is not a Saulteaux speaker, he is Nakota, but he also encouraged the kids and me to use the language whenever possible. I noticed that he would eventually start to ask what this and that meant in the language. Though language learning was not focused on him, he too was getting to know a bit of the language just from hearing it around the house and seeing it on our walls. Having that support in language learning from significant people in our lives can make a world of difference.

4.4.1.2 Pōsins

After realizing that my sons were happy when playing and using the language to the best of their abilities, I searched for other ways to keep their attention focused on language learning. I wanted to find a way that would catch my youngest son’s attention and keep it, while being able to use the language. This was on my mind and I would research and search different avenues for language learning amongst younger children, but nothing seemed to catch my attention, or
nothing seemed to work for my son’s learning. Nothing that I was not already doing in my home. One evening I was just randomly flipping through my social media when I noticed someone from the community was giving away a kitten. While I was looking at pictures of the kitten, I was saying in my head “pōsīns”, which means “cat” in Saulteaux. An idea came to my head that I wanted to get this kitten for my sons, not only to have a new pet, but to use this kitten as a language tool. This kitten would be my teaching tool, and my son’s learning tool. So, I decided to get the kitten. I wrote about this in my journal that day:

This evening I picked up a kitten from the community, I normally wouldn’t do this, but I needed the cat to be a teaching tool. Just maybe this cat will motivate my youngest to learn more the language? I can tell him to feed the cat? To give him milk, to hug him, to take care of him. The kittens name will be pōsīns…tāwā pōsīnsēns (welcome little cat) (Journal entry, September, 2017)

I brought it home and introduced the cat to my sons. I told them “pōsīns išinihkāso” which mean “his name is cat.” Both boys fell in love with the kitten right away and were excited to learn that the cat was their new family pet. They did not know that this new family member was to be a language tool for them to learn from.

Figure 7: Pōsīns

I told them that “pōsīns” only knew the Saulteaux language, so we had to talk to Pōsīns in the language, because that’s all it understood. They took to the rules of speaking to the kitten
right away. They would say things like “ampē omā pōsīns” (come here cat), “wīhsinin pōsīns” (eat cat), “minihkwēn tōhtōhsāpo pōsīns” (drink milk cat) or “minihkwēn nipi” (drink water) nipan pōsīns (sleep cat). These were some of the basic words and sentences that the boys used for communicating with the kitten. I started to make daily routines for the boys to follow with the kitten: some of the rules for the cat were Ahsam pōsīn (feed the cat), nipi mīna pōsīns (give the cat water), mīna tōhtōsāpo pōsīns (give the cat milk), nākitokās pōsīns (take care of the cat), pēhki a pōsīn (clean the cat), sāwēnim pōsīns (love the cat). Though pōsīns could not respond to them in the language, my boys were using the language with something that they liked and cared about, something that was their own. This was a good teaching tool to use when their grandmother was not home with us. When searching, thinking and desperate for something that would interest my sons, Pōsīns did a wonderful job.

4.5 Reclaiming domains

After the success of Pōsīns, I then started researching more ideas for both my home and my mother’s home. I needed things or activities that we needed to use the language for that pōsīns could not help with. Hinton (2009) suggests that as language learning and teaching is to take place in the homes, we should set manageable goals. I found a framework for language learning called “reclaiming home domains” (Zahir, 2019). Zahir (2019) describes the process of reclaiming domains in the following way:

A language nest area has activities that we do regularly. for example, in the kitchen we wash dishes, put away food, make a salad, sweep the floor, etc. We call these activities domains. When we decide to do these activities only in the language, we call this process reclaiming domains (p. 161).
This language framework seemed to put language learning in a simpler and more manageable context. I wrote about the first day of reclaiming domains in my journal:

Today I started a new language revitalization framework, called “reclaiming domains”. This is where I take one part of my home and master it. I think I will have the same idea when doing this, but go about it in a different way. I will for instance use my baby son’s bath time, to teach home how to say have a bath, wash your hair, wash your belly, wash your legs etc. I will do this in different areas throughout the house. I am quite excited to do this… there are so many different ways one can learn the language, if you wanted to. It is for sure a lot of work, but it is work that is worth it in so many ways (Journal Entry, September, 2017)

I started to think of what I could do in my home that would work effectively for my sons. I began by setting small goals, instead of rushing things and making impossible goals for language learning. I started with bedtime. When it was bedtime, I would speak only the language to the boys kawišimon (go to bed) from kāšīnkwēn (wash your face), kišipinkinīnīcīn (brush your teeth), awēpison (get dressed), cover up with your blanket, kipān kiskīnsikōn (close your eyes), nipan (sleep) minō tipihkan (good night) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Kawišimōn

This seemed to work well for them. So, I started to use only the language during bath times (see Figure 9).
During bath times I would tell my youngest son to “Kīšīpi kisitēn” (wash your feet), “Kīšīpi kikitēn” (wash your legs), “kīšīpi kinikēn” (wash your arms), “kīšīpi kimihsat” (wash your belly), “kīšīpi kitīhēn” (wash your bottom), “kīšīpi kistikwanēn” (wash your head). At first, I would have to motion to him what I was saying then he eventually started to understand what I was telling him.

I noticed with these specific domains in the house, it was making our language learning goals more attainable and successful. My children were starting to understand and respond to more words and phrases. While starting this framework, I started first by introducing certain words, for example “ostikwan”-(his/her head).” Once my boys started to understand the words, I started to make them into phrases, like “kīšīpi kistikwanēn” – (wash your head) Being consistent with the reclaimed domains and repetition played a major role in my son’s language learning.
We not only reclaimed domains in my home but also reclaimed domains at my mother’s home. At her home, it was done in the kitchen, where they could cook, bake, set the table together, getting dressed to go outside, this domain eventually moved to my home also.

I was quite fond of this language revitalization framework because what seemed impossible one day was now full of possibilities, possibilities that would change the lives of my sons. These possibilities also influenced the way that I viewed language teaching to not only my children but to the community’s children. The main idea was to create enough reclaimed domains in my home and my mother’s home that our homes would eventually feel like a mini language nest. Even though my idea of how my mini language nest was to be done was short-lived, I was content with how my sons were learning their language. In the short time that my study was active, my sons were learning, understanding, and engaged. I recommend this way of language learning to everyone to reach those small goals and attain them with significant success.
4.6 Conclusion

My goal to create a mini language nest with my mother and sons was to show the importance of learning our Indigenous languages in the comfort of our own homes with family and Elders. I also explored how to use our ceremonies and lodges as our guides as a prerequisite to language learning as it fits all in one. We cannot do one without the other. I walked into this study thinking that this would be an easy task because I had everything I needed for it to be successful: a lodge keeper willing to pray for us, a home, an Elder, my sons’ grandmother, and my sons with a ton of enthusiasm and confidence. I was humbled very quickly, I was taught that language learning is hard work and it takes time, and it may take us down different roads and different ways of learning and teaching. While living in a society where English is the dominant language, it is hard to teach and learn your language in an immersed environment. We would need a place where there are no televisions, no radios, no stores, or internet and where there is nothing but our languages and the basic things around us. But, living in a fast-paced society where people are constantly moving makes this utopia impossible. So, my study demonstrates that we stand and deal with the situations we are in and make it work to our advantage. We use different ways of teaching, we forgive ourselves for not doing this with our children since birth, we keep moving forward with our languages, we keep teaching them and adapting them to this new world we live in, and we never give up, we only do better.
CHAPTER 5: REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

When starting on my research I knew that I needed to focus on immersion models that would work well for Indigenous language revitalization for my family and community. I was seeking an immersion model that was holistic, that could be done every day, and that supported family language learning. Through this all, I knew that ceremony, prayer, and elders needed to be incorporated before anything in my research. Language and ceremony go hand in hand, and who better to learn the language from better than our elders; elders and family in the comfort of your own home. Throughout the world there are many different kinds of language nests. Some are incorporated in schools and daycares, which is good, but I decided to use the original language nest strategy that was conducted amongst the Maori in New Zealand between Grandmothers and their grandchildren. With that, asked my mother to be a part if the study for she is a crucial part to language learning, not only in my home, but also in our community.

During my study I was excited that I was taking the initiative to bring the language back to my children. I went in full of optimism and confidence because I had all the tools I needed already in place to run a language nest. I was instantly humbled because of our fast-paced society, filled with movies, technology, and English! My children wanted to watch movies, go on their devices to watch YouTube videos, and play outside away from the language. They did not care to learn the language at first, and this crushed my heart. People who were not involved in the language nest did not care to refrain from using the English language while we were in the mini language. In the beginning, a lot of time I felt defeated in our language learning and immersion practices. This is was only for a short time. I had to change my way of thinking and my way of viewing language learning in our current society and times. This allowed language
learning and success to take over. Now the smallest bit of language use has become a success. We learned as a family what different language tools and language teachings were useful and fulfilling for language learning. We learned that, though we were faced with different challenges, we had to overcome them and accept that things would not operate how we anticipated and that that was okay. We learned that language work is hard, but very worth it. We learned to be flexible, to be accepting, to be forgiving, and to be resilient.

During my study, I made it my main goal to answer these three very specific questions.

1.) How will language nests help my family and community?

2.) What are the challenges of using a language nest for Indigenous language revitalization?

3.) How can elders, lodges and homes be agents and sites of Indigenous language revitalization?

These questions are direct and to the point. They are not complicated, but focus on the needs and the direction we need to take in order to support language immersion practices within our communities.

5.2 Answers to Research Questions

5.2.1 Research Question 1: How language nests help my family

The immersion language nest model has been recommended from all over the world as one of the most successful language revitalization models (King, 2001). Language nests not only offer language revitalization or retention to children and or adults, but allow family connectedness and intergenerational learning to take place. Renowned sociolinguist, Joshua Fishman (2001) states that the core element of successful minority language maintenance is dependent on the intergenerational transmission of language between parents and their children.
in the home. Creating a mini language nest within my home and my mother’s home and learning the language has brought a different kind of relationship between us as a family. We were not only working with the language, and teaching it to my sons, but we were connecting on a different level of closeness and sacredness. As a family we were trying something different and it was very new to my sons. It made us that much closer as a family, due to the fact that we were doing this for the first time together, we went in with specific goals and were not sure what the outcome was going to be. Though some days were hard, each was successful in its own way that we would only see later on when language learning was taking place. Language nests not only brought the language alive in our homes, it brought determination, hope, and connection; connection not only to the language, but to our culture. It brought closeness to our family in ways it was not present before. Our mini language nest was intended for language learning for my sons at the time. I had no idea that I would be using the strategies I implemented in our language nest for future children to come.

Since completion of the study, my daughter joined our family. Although my daughter is still growing up with English all around her, she is learning and hearing the language more often from birth than her older brothers did. With my daughter, I am able to use the strategies I implemented in my language nest in a more natural way. Instead of me scrambling around to have new techniques of language learning in our home, the stage is already set, and it is implemented in my daughter’s everyday life with the help of my sons. My sons are able to communicate in the language naturally amongst themselves and now with their baby sister. For my daughter, this is not something new, it is not something that had just abruptly happened one day, the language has been present in her life since the day she was born. So, all of the struggles and discouraging days I had with my sons during our mini language nest were not only rewarded
with their language learning, it is still rewarding my family years later after the birth of another child. My daughter is hearing not only the English language, but she is hearing her mother tongue. This is something she will carry with her for the rest of her life, something that is not seen as a struggle, but something that is seen as a part of who she is because it has been there since she was born.

Figure 11: Mīkwanēns

5.2.2 Research Question 1: How language nests can help my community

Being the community language teacher, I was seeing progress in my student’s language learning, but not so much in the homes or with the parents of those students. The students were learning their language, but had no one to speak it with once they left school. So, I needed to bring language to the community in a different manner. In order for me to do this, I needed to implement it first within my own home and family. I needed to create a mini language nest within my own home, with my own children to show that this is important. It is important enough that my children and my family were to set the way of what could become the norm in my community. As Leanne Hinton (2011) has stated in her research, endangered languages hardly have any speech communities for everyday use. By supporting family learning templates and resources in the language nest, this will eventually support the establishment of a language community (Hinton, 2011). In creating my mini language nest, the goal was not only for language learning for my children, but for the children and families of my community. I believe
that the more my study is out in the open for people to see, the more the community will want to involved in language learning. The more that they see the real struggles to overcome when doing language work within their own community, the more acceptable language learning may be. I believe that people are always afraid to make mistakes, so when they realize the struggles, doubt, and discouragement I faced in the beginning of our mini language nest, they will see more real and attainable language learning can be. Language nests will allow community to use the language in their homes in any way possible. It will not only bring about the language, but it will create cultural awareness, family connectedness, a sense of identity, and stronger family relations. Closer family connections will make the community closer as a whole, as community is family. Viles (2013) states that home-based language learning is so much more than learning the language within the walls of the home, but it opens up opportunities to re-examine what it means to have a home in general, what it means to take care of a home, and what it means to live with purpose (Viles, 2013). Home based language learning is both the reclaiming of the language in the home, but also re-creation of a Native home (Viles, 2013). If we have healthier homes, we can have a healthier community.

5.2.3 Research Question 2: What are the challenges of using a language nest?

5.2.3.1 Resistance

There was resistance from my children in learning the language and using the language because they were not used to using it or hearing it every day. Creating a language nest and expecting my children to take to it right away was a big mistake. My children had to be eased into it and encouraged to use and learn the language. A lot of patience had to be taken into consideration because, without it, the learners of the language will be resistant, simply because this was all new.
5.2.3.2 Time and space

In creating a language nest, you want the learners to feel comfortable with learning their language in the comfort of their own homes. In my experience creating our language nest, again the time and space seemed to set the stage for language learning. We had a time restriction and a certain place to be at a certain time for language learning. This was hard to do and, because we were on a restricted time limit, I felt that we were running out of time, and not much was getting accomplished. This happened until I took the time restraints away and made our language nest an everyday thing.

5.2.3.3 English dominance

In the beginning of our mini language nest, there were many challenges. This was because I had expected our language nest to flourish in a way that was unrealistic. Unrealistic because of the societies we live in today. English dominance was probably the bigger challenge that we are faced with when creating a language nest. This is because we live in a society where English is everywhere. Our children are exposed to technology filled with English dominance, they can go to the local store and everything is in English. I had to wrap my head around the fact that no matter how badly I wanted our language nest to be an immersion model, it just could not be due to all of the English around us.

5.2.4 Question 3: How can elders, lodges and homes be agents and sites of Indigenous language revitalization?

5.2.4.1 Elders
Our Elders are seen as very important resources in Indigenous communities. Elder speakers are seen as a precious resource to efforts to document, maintain, or reclaim a language, and their importance to language revitalization is widely recognized (Albers & Supahan, 2013). Elders can also provide critical validation for language revitalization efforts of the tribe or community (Grounds & Grounds, 2013). For our mini language nest, it was important for me to ask my mother to be a part of the nest because she is the grandmother and also because she is a language carrier in the community. Our Elders should be a part of every decision made within our communities, especially to those related to culture and language. It was my Mother, who is an elder that grounded me, when I was discouraged, it was her patience and wisdom that allowed me to see things for what they were, and that it was fine and that it would be fine, but just to keep going.

5.2.4.2 Lodges

Language is at the core of traditional ways; without language it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to transmit cultural teachings and community-specific ways of being without using the Indigenous language. Elders say that specific ceremonies, songs, and dances are tied to the language (The National Association of Friendship Centers, 2018). Being able to learn your language from ceremony and lodge would be a blessing, sometimes this is the only way to do it, depending on the specifics of what is to be learned. As I have stated earlier, it was important for me to use ceremony as a base of my study. I could not do a study on language revitalization without ceremony. We need our lodges to hear the songs, to listen to the prayers, and to learn lesson from the teachings in the language. Even if Western academia does not acknowledge our ceremonies and lodges as research methodology, it still needs to be done in as a part of our
Indigenous worldview. Not only are our ceremonies sources of knowing, they also sanction actions of great importance to the people (Kovach, 2009).

5.2.4.3 Homes

Cultural values and beliefs are most often transmitted through interactions at home with family. Noori (2009) states that to reverse language damage, language must be returned to the children and the home. It is good to have our children learning the language in their schools, but in order for children to maintain and use the language, the language needs to be in their homes, spoken amongst all family members. Regular use of the language outside of the school normalizes use of the language and helps in socializing the children to appreciate their language as an ordinary way of home and community life (Chrisp, 2005). My children were allowed to be themselves at home, they were allowed to be shy, they were allowed to make mistakes, and they were allowed to learn their language at their own pace, and more importantly they were allowed to learn their language with their Mother and Grandmother.

5.3 Recommendations for at home learning

In doing this study, I went in with my mind in a totally different perspective as to what it actually ended up being. In the beginning, I was very discouraged because of the different factors that we were faced with during our mini language nest. I expected or wanted the outcomes to be a lot different. I had become so disappointed in the fact that things were not going as planned. With conversations and encouragement from mentors, I decided to keep on trying with our language nest. I had to change my way of thinking in order to be successful. I started research different language learning and teaching tools that would fit the needs of my children’s language learning, I stopped depending on my mother do be with us day in and day out, and started doing
things around my home on my own, so my sons would be constantly learning whether it be small successes of big successes, it was still a success.

5.3.1 Be Open Minded

I had to put the idea and vision I had about language nests aside in order to move forward with the language nest. I had to be more open, accepting, and patient to see results in my children’s language learning. I needed to accept the fact that our mini language nest was not going to be full of complete language learning throughout all of the language nest time. I had to realize that this was very new, and possibly even discouraging, for my children because they have never had to be completely immersed in their language before.

I needed to put my Western academic way of doing things out of my mind and go back to our Indigenous way of doing things; which was with patience, encouragement, and support. Even the smallest accomplishment was a victory for language learning. I had to realize that language work was hard and even though I thought we had all of the tools we needed to have a successful fully immersed language nest, it would not work without patience and understanding. Instead of staying discouraged, I had to change my way of thinking. I had to change the vision I had before walking into our language nest. I had to accept the fact that we were living in a world where language use and learning was so new to my children, and it was going to take some time for them to adapt. So, I started looking for ways to accommodate this by developing new ways of learning that would catch my children’s attention and keep it. I needed to be open minded in my children’s language learning. I needed to expand our way of language learning.

5.3.2 Language learning plan
After realizing that our language nest was going to look a little bit different than envisioned, I had to come up with a language plan for my children. I needed to find different learning avenues to introduce to my sons so that they would stay engaged in language learning, and eventually would become confident enough in their language. Instead of sticking to the initial language nest set times for learning in immersed language with my mother, I took it upon myself to have language learning consistently, even at my home, all day long. I started to research different ways of teaching my children the language. My Mother’s encouragement and belief in us, and in language learning was

5.3.3 Using the linguistic landscape theory

Linguistic landscape theory is where languages we see in print give us information about population of a neighborhood, signaling what languages are prominent and valued in public and private spaces and acknowledging the people who identify with that particular language (Dagenais, 2009). For example, creating language visuals around your home help remind you to speak the language whenever necessary. This framework is not so much to teach reading and writing of the language, but to show that it is there and it is important. If family members continuously see it, they will remember to use the language. Making the language visible is making it important. Labeling the home, would also help language learners to remember certain words and phrases around the home, if they are not yet speakers. Once the language for one area of the home or activity of the home is being learned, then more vocabulary can be implemented, and different labels can go up.

5.3.4 Reclaiming domains
Another recommendation I have for others who want to increase their use of an Indigenous language in the home is to use a language learning strategy called “reclaiming domains.” This framework suggests that we create an area in the home where we do things regularly (Zahir, 2018). For instance, in the kitchen, we may wash the dishes, put the dishes away, cook food, and prepare food. These small activities in a specific room are called domains. So, instead of overwhelming the learner and the teacher, one could create small domains in their homes, where they would hear the language, learn the language, and master the language. Once this is done, they can move into another part of their home, and do it again. My children took to this concept very easily. We may have had several domains going at a time, but it was easier to look at it in this perspective. This allowed language learning to flourish in my mini language nest. The children knew what to expect, and knew what to do when they reached a certain area of the house. Reclaiming domains is a perfect language tool for at home learner who may not have a fluent speaker by their side. This concept gives the family small but realistic goals to achieve in language learning.

5.3.5 Implementing family pets

I had to find ways that would interest my youngest son into learning the language. So, I brought home a kitten and named him Pōsīns. I told my son that Pōsīns did not know how to speak English, and that he only knew how to speak Saulteaux. This was a bit easier to implement being that Pōsīns was new to the home also. I would tell my son to do specific things with Pōsīns. For instance, I would tell him to feed the cat, put the cat to bed, love the cat, give the cat milk to drink, all in the language. My sons were starting to understand what was being said once I said these things to them repetitively. My sons eventually started to talk to Pōsīns in the
language: wīhsinin pōsīns, nīpān pōsīns, ampē omā pōsīns. Language use was now common because my sons were interested, engaged and aware. Even though the cat was unable to communicate back to my sons in the language, this concept still gave my sons the ability to use their language in a natural way, being that Pōsīns only understood Saulteaux.

5.3.6 Language use

Another recommendation is to use the language whenever and wherever possible for as much as you can when you can. Do not just set specific times when to use the language, use it more naturally throughout the day, evening and night. Use the language from when one wakes up to when one goes to sleep sporadically, until your vocabulary builds. Use the language, even if you are only using it just a little at a time. For instance, saying “eat” at lunch time, “wake up” in the morning, “good night” at night, “wash your face”, “do the dishes”, “clean your home” etc. Using the language at any time of the day, all day, would make language learning seem more natural than having specific learning times set. Use the language while going shopping, while going to an event, while driving in the care. Not limiting language use to specific areas or times will allow the language to be more natural and realistic. Once I started using small, natural dialogue with my sons anytime of the day, without it being an actual focus, my sons would start to use these contexts in the same way amongst each other during play, cleaning up, bedtime or whenever.

5.3.7 Encouragement

We have to give praise and encouragement to our children when they are learning the language; even for the smallest accomplishment language learners need to be acknowledged.
Motivation towards learning a second language has been shown to be important for learning achievement (Norton & Syed, 2009). A positive active role would involve parents monitoring their child’s progress in language learning, showing interest, and encouraging success (Gardner, 1985). It is very important for a child’s language learning for parents and family members to motivate, encourage, and praise when a child is doing well, or even just attempting to use the language. For instance, when my children would reply or acknowledge language use, I would praise them by saying “Minō tōtam!” or clapping when something was done, whether it was correct or not.

5.4 Recommendations for Indigenous language research

I know in many cases in communities, not all families are fortunate enough to have a fluent speaker ready and willing to help, or have a fluent speaker in the home or family at all. I believe more research needs to be conducted with adult language learners in a family environment so they can teach their children the language. I believe it is fine if families are learning together. At this point and time, any amount of language use and learning is great. If parents can be modeled language learning in their homes, for their children, language revitalization would take place more often and throughout more homes. People need to learn how to learn and help one another teach the language, even if it is done amongst each other without any fluent speakers. Language learners, with a lot of patience and determination have the ability to learn their language with the proper tools.

Perhaps language immersion models such as the Masters Apprentice program, also known as the Mentor Apprentice program in British Columbia, can be implemented more in communities. More research studies and more knowledge about this program can benefit our
adult language learners and set a foundation for them to learn the language for themselves and then to implement the language with their families and children. The Master Apprentice program allows adult learners to be partnered up with a fluent speaker or elder to learn the language in real life situations which can include performing traditional tasks and skills. It could also involve teaching home concepts as cooking and cleaning etc. If a person commits to this learning style for a long period of time, the apprentice will be at least conversationally proficient in their language and ready to be language teachers to other people. (Montgomery-Anderson, 2008).

Other language revitalization models that can be researched are models such the reclaiming home domains. Families can be taught this tool to use in their homes as a learning experience for language learning and teaching. One does not necessarily need a fluent speaker to do this which could give people and families the hope of language learning at their own pace. A lot of the time not having the proper resources or enough resources for people is discouraging enough that they do not to try or follow through with language learning, let alone revitalization. The reclaiming domains model would make language learning that much more attainable and motivating to pursue because it is less overwhelming for the learner. As Hinton (2003) explains, in order to strive towards the larger goal of language nests, it serves teacher learners to set smaller, manageable goals. I do agree with this, but also if people were to know and understand the concept of reclaiming domains, this model can be used for families to create their own mini language nests in the home. Once one is taught to reclaim domains in their homes, they can eventually create mini language nests in different parts of their homes which would eventually lead to a whole language nest in the home. The goal in today’s language learning is to use the language as much as you can whenever possible.
For myself, my future study would relate to ways to implement these language revitalization models into our communities and homes, and to build the confidence within our nation to want to learn the language and be consistent in using it. It is important to teach families that it is fine to start with no resources, that it is okay to be your own resource, that it is okay to make mistakes, and that slow progress is better than no progress. Our Elders, our knowledge keepers and our language keepers are very important and guide the way to our Indigenous way of life and worldviews, but when they leave this world, we cannot use that as an excuse to sit and ponder the would ifs, the could ifs, and the should ifs. It is imperative for us to live in a world where our elders have showed us enough knowledge to grasp our own language learning and way of life as Indigenous people.

5.5 Recommendations for communities

Everyone’s community is unique in more ways than one. The people of the community, the language background, the geography, and the size of the community all have implications to language learning and revitalization. Every community needs to come up with their own specific language plan, one that will work and one that will be consistent for that communities learning. People need to be told the truth about language learning; that it is hard work and that it needs constant attention and focus to attain fluency or even semi fluent characteristic. Communities need to be shown the importance of language and culture, that it is easy to say we are Saulteaux or Cree, but do not know anything about it or speak the language.

Realistic goals for community achievement need to be made so that learners do not get overwhelmed and discouraged. This could include teaching members how to learn the language by reclaiming domains, by using the Master Apprentice program, or by having evening classes
for language learning, or by implementing more immersion style learning in the community school classrooms and daycares. There are so many different things that can be done in a community for language revitalization, but the key is to be realistic, to make progress in language learning and revitalization by using small and manageable goals, and to be consistent in those goals. For instance, it is important to give families enough encouragement and learning tools that it is manageable for them to do this in their own homes and with their families, and then they can display their language accomplishments during community events such as community dinners, community plays, ceremonies, powwows, etc. The sky is the limit when it comes to community language planning. The key is to plan for the community and follow through with it, no matter how hard it is.

I believe our communities are doing fine, when they are getting classes for adults mandated in their communities, but are people using the words, phrases, verses in their everyday life? Are they implementing their language learning in their homes with their children? Or are they only using the language, in those specific language classes? I believe the people need to be taught how to use the words and phrases they are learning with their families. Perhaps they do not know when to use the language, or how to use the language. I believe it would be in everybody’s best interest to learn how to use the language. it is one thing to learn how to speak the language, it is another thing to learn how to use it and teach it to family members, in a more natural setting.

5.6 Conclusion

Taking the initiative to retain or revitalize a language is hard but rewarding work. A lot of times, we have a plan set in our minds that we think will be successful for our families’ or communities’ learning. Once this plan is altered in some way, we get discouraged and want to
stop. No matter how hard language learning is, we cannot stop, we have to keep going. We have to learn different avenues of learning and teaching the language that fits the needs of our families, children, and community. We have to celebrate the small successes and find the encouragement to keep going. Our culture and language are who we are as Indigenous people, we cannot just give up when times get hard. Our children and our communities deserve so much more than that.

Different learning tools need to be implemented with different people in different situations. What may work for some people may not work for others. Encouragement and determination are big factors in retaining a language, especially when it comes to maintaining a language nest. Living in a fast-paced society where English is the dominant language in every facet of daily life can sometimes be discouraging. We need to overcome our thoughts of how things should be, and accept things for what they are and adapt to the situation. Even though English is the dominant language in our communities and resources are scarce, language learning is achievable through research of what our families and communities need. Our Elders, our homes and our ceremonies are the base and guide to our language learning journeys. We need to find ways to use the language in everyday situations in our natural surroundings. Our Indigenous tongues need to be normalized and used every day, everywhere and anytime. Language learning should be taught in the homes through intergenerational learning with parents, grandparents, and siblings. If resources are scarce and fluent speakers are not available, language revitalization models such as the Masters apprentice program and/ or reclaiming home domains can be implemented for adult language learning, which can eventually be transmitted to the rest of the family for learning. Language learning/retention/revitalization is a long process, and it is a hard process, but it is necessary.
This study is a small language revitalization model that is filled with many tools that can be used by anyone who is seeking to revitalize, retain and learn their language. We need not depend on anyone for fluency, funding or resources if you have patience, determination and the willingness to try. Language learnings cannot expect to become fluent speakers overnight, or within a week or within a month, language learning takes time. When times get tough, language learning still needs to be done. Small accomplishments in language learning are still accomplishments. People have to get over the fears of failing, the fears of not pronouncing words properly and the dependence on other people to do it for us. Our languages make us who we are as Indigenous people, it may be hard to learn, hard to accomplish, but it is rewarding.

Kinanākomin
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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONSENT

August 8, 2018
Project title:
Baby and his Wah Wah: Language revitalization through lived experiences

Supervisor:
Andrea Sterzuk, academic supervisor
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Researcher:
Denise Runns, Graduate Student
Faculty of Education, University of Regina
runns20d@uregina.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- Indigenous language revitalization through immersion practices is essential for Indigenous communities to strive in their heritage tongues. For my thesis study, I will be creating a mini language in my home.
- This will be a model for my community and other First Nation communities to practise immersion concepts through lived experience in their language teaching and learning.

Procedures:

- A mini language nest will be created in the home, with four participants. This language nest will last for approximately two full weeks, some evenings and four full weekends. Language learning will be done with real life situations through lived experiences. In this study the sites of language learning will include the home, shopping, ceremonies, powwows etc. language learning will be done while playing, shopping, cooking, eating, doing chores, attending ceremony and powwows etc.
- I will be doing two interviews with you, the first one will be at the beginning of the study which will last for approximately 30 minutes. The second interview will be at the end of the study, this interview will also last approximately 30 minutes. Both interviews will be videotaped and/or audio recorded. These interviews will be conducted in both the English language and the Saulteaux language.
- Throughout the language nest, I will be using audio recording and video taping of interaction between the participants sporadically.
- You have the right not to be recorded at any time.

**Potential Risks:**

- There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research

**Potential benefits:**

- This study has the potential to create language revitalization in homes, through immersion practices for families and communities.

**Confidentiality:**

- As this is a research project pertaining to language revitalization for home and community, your names will be given throughout the study.
- Any data collected, video and/or audio recording will be kept in a safe and secure area.

**Storage of Data:**

- The assignments will be stored in Andrea Sterzuk’s password protected computer
- the documents and files will be kept and secured until August 31, 2023

**Right to withdraw:**

- You have the right to withdraw from this project, before or after the study has begun. The deadline for you to withdraw will be before my thesis work has been submitted, which will be May 30, 2019.
- You can withdraw from the study by either contacting me through telephone or in person

**Follow up:**

- To obtain results from the study, please contact me through email or telephone @ runns20d@uregina.ca or 306-432-5323

**Questions or concerns:**

- Contact Denise Kennedy by email or phone using the information provided earlier.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the U of R Research Ethics Boards on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the research office (306)-585-4775

**Consent:**

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Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided: I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this consent for has been given to me for my records.

_________________________     ________________________   ____________________
Name of participant                       Signature of participant             Date

______________________________         ________________________
Researchers signature                                    Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.
Hi sons, you both know that mommy is going to school, and some of my homework that I must do is to work with our Saulteaux language. So, I have chosen to work with you boys, kokum and myself in our home this summer. Mommy is interested in how we will work together, learning our language and only using our language in our home. We won’t be able to use the English language. Once I am done my home work, I will have to show my teacher Andrea the work that we done together, and I will write a big paper about everything that we learned as a family using our Saulteaux language. Then other people will be able to read about everything that we done as a family.

Mommy and kokum will talk to you only in Saulteaux throughout the day, and I will write everything in my notebook. I will also have to record you guys with mommy’s camera though out our language nest, but not all the time. I will only do this sometimes throughout the day, while you’re speaking in Saulteaux. Only Mommy, Kokum and Andrea will see and hear these recordings. I know that this is going to be hard sometimes to speak in Saulteaux and that’s alright if you don’t feel like speaking in Saulteaux all the time, and if at anytime you don’t want to do this anymore, you can stop okay? Mommy wants you to be happy and to feel comfortable in everything that you do in life.

When we are learning the language together, you guys will be playing with your toys, playing games with me and kokum, cooking, eating, playing outside, going to sweats and pow wows. We will do everything we do as a family already, but we will be speaking in the Saulteaux language instead of English. This is going to be so much fun, and mommy will be so proud of both of you for doing your best!

I am writing you guys this letter to ask you permission to do this project with me. To allow mommy to interview you, and to record you with my camera. No one else will see my homework, except my teacher Andrea. When mommy records, it will be your choice if you want to talk in the camera at any given time. It will be your decision to make.

I want you both to understand, that it is your right not to do this homework with mommy anymore, you can stop whenever you feel like. You just have to let me know when you don’t want to speak in the language or be a part of my recordings okay? Mommy will not get mad, and I understand that maybe it is not the right time for you to do this, and that’s is ok.

I want to participate in the project with Denise Runns (mommy)

Yes _________ No __________

Boy’s Signature __________________________
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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions (with Grandmother)

1. As a Saulteaux first language speaker, what are your thoughts on language use in the community?
2. As a parent, what were your goals, hopes and dreams in terms of language teaching in the home?

3. Looking back at your experience as a parent, would you make any changes in the decisions you made around language use? What was satisfying? What was disappointing?

4. How do you see the relationship between ceremony and language learning?

5. What are your thoughts on language nests and language learning in home and community?

6. Do you have any additional thoughts, ideas or feelings you would like to share about language nests or language revitalization in general?
APPENDIX D

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Denise Runns
SUPERVISOR
Dr. Andrea Sterzuk

Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval

DEPARTMENT REB# Faculty of Education 2018-121

TITLE
Baby and his Wah Wah: Language revitalization through lived experiences

APPROVED ON RENEWAL DATE August 14, 2018 August 14, 2019

APPROVAL OF
Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review Consent Form
Children Letter of Assent
Interview Questions

Full Board Meeting Delegated Review

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, or related documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, procedures or related documents should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for the renewal and closure forms: https://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/ethicsforms.html
Laurie Clune PhD REB Chair University of Regina

Please send all correspondence to:

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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

«Principal_investigator». -DEPARTMENT «dept_name» Bio # «Ethics_ID_old»