

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Institute of Cultural Research

Elizaveta Diachenko

**The Methodology of Preservation and Revitalization of Salish Language on  
the Flathead Reservation**

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Laur Vallikivi, PhD  
Associate Professor of Ethnology

Tartu, 2021

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	3
Introduction .....	5
CHAPTER 1. Theoretical framework .....	15
1.1 Terminology .....	15
1.2 Language endangerment, loss, and death.....	18
1.3 Language revitalization and preservation .....	20
1.4 Native American language ideologies .....	25
1.5 Indigenous Methodologies .....	27
CHAPTER 2. Research methodology and ethics.....	30
CHAPTER 3. Salish language programs on the Flathead Reservation.....	43
3.1 Séliš-Qłispe Culture Committee .....	47
3.2 Salish Kootenai College .....	49
3.3 Nk'wusm Salish language school .....	51
Conclusion.....	54
Resümee .....	57
References .....	58

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my warm gratitude to these people and institutions that made this research possible.

I want to thank the Bitterroot Salish community for welcoming me on their land and providing me with all the help and guidance I needed to conduct my research. Their understanding concerning my lack of fieldwork experience and patience throughout my research made me feel welcome and appreciated by this amazing community. Their warm and welcoming presence made my fieldwork feel all the more exciting and life changing, and their resilience and determination inspire me so much. I hope that my research would be of help to the Salish community, and my intention is to do my research in a good way that they showed me. Lémlmtš, my dear friends!

I want to express my gratitude to the Salish Elder, Anthony (Atwen) Incashola Sr., who welcomed me on his land and approved my research even in the times of the pandemic, where all personal communication was severely limited, and he had to come out of his way to review my application and approve it. His wise words that I was able to hear while being on the Flathead Reservation gave me a much needed insight into the cultural life of this community.

I would like to especially thank Rene Dubay, who made all my interviews and connections possible, working relentlessly to introduce me to all the people I wanted to meet, and for making me feel welcome. I am honored to call her my dear friend, and without her tireless help this research would not have been possible.

Many thanks and warmest wishes to my dear friend Dr. Michael Munson, who was my guide through all the challenges of conducting my research during the pandemic and finding my way in the new environment. Her warm friendship and tremendous help in any way she could is so much appreciated and cherished. I would not be able to finish this thesis without her guidance and support.

I wanted to thank the head of the department for Native American studies at Montana State University, Dr. Walter Fleming, who welcomed me in Montana and patiently worked with me through all my fieldwork plans and giving me the direction I followed throughout my research.

Special thanks to my University of Tartu. This amazing university gave me all the freedom, guidance and support I needed to work on my thesis. My Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies program provided me with so many

opportunities to pursue my research interests and offered me all the help it could, being patient and understanding with me while I was conducting my fieldwork in Montana, far away from Tartu.

I wanted to express my gratitude to Dr. Elo-Hanna Seljamaa, who offered me all the help she could and all the time that I needed to finish working on my thesis. Her guidance was instrumental to the present research. Aitäh, kaasprofessor!

Special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Laur Vallikivi, who was patient and supportive throughout my work. His attention to detail and willingness to help me as quickly as he could proved to be extremely helpful, and his recommendations and guidance were so important to me. I feel so lucky that I asked you to be my supervisor. He taught me to stop trying to prioritize truth and nuance to dry objectivity I was aspiring to achieve. Suur tänu Teie abi eest!

My sincerest gratitude to SA Archimedes, who fully funded my first fieldwork trip and made it possible for me to travel around Montana and live there for a while to acquire necessary connections. Their financial help made it possible, and without it I would not be able to conduct this research at all.

My biggest thanks go to my family. My family is the entire reason I even started studying at the University of Tartu: they made sure I felt safe while living on my own in a foreign country all by myself, and their love and support mean so much to me. They always believed I will become a scholar one day, and they made sure that nothing would stand in my way. They believed in me when I decided that I need to go research Native American language ideologies in America, and they were, and are, so proud of all of my achievements. Спасибо!

## Introduction

The Flathead Reservation belongs to three Native American tribes: Salish (Séliš), Pend d'Oreille (Q'lispé, angl. Kalispel), and Kootenai (Ktunaxa). Two of them, Salish and the Pend d'Oreille, speak languages of the Salishan language family, spoken from Montana to the western Pacific Coast. In its current state, the Flathead Reservation encompasses 1.3 million acres (526,000 hectares), as opposed to 22 million acres (8,903,000 hectares) initially occupied by the Salish and Pend d'Oreille on both sides of the Continental Divide: British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. (Flathead Watershed Sourcebook, n.d.) The population of the Reservation is 26,829 (2019).

Salish tribe living on the Flathead Reservation is sometimes called the Bitterroot Salish, and for the purposes of precision and clarity, I will call this group of Salish the Bitterroot Salish and Salish interchangeably because there are other Salish groups residing in other places.

Originally Bitterroot Salish lived close to modern-age Billings, MT, as well as to the west and south of Great Falls, MT, all the way to Montana-Wyoming border (Carling I. Malouf, 1998, pp. 297–298.) and to the Bitterroot Valley (hence the name).

Culturally the Bitterroot Salish and the Pend d'Oreille people are very close, they were hunters and gatherers with a rich and vibrant oral tradition, and they lived (and they continue to some extent nowadays) in tight-knit communities with strong family structures. They maintain a holistic view of life, which means that “all things — humans, animals, plants, rocks, and soil — are interconnected and should be respected individually and as a whole.” (Flathead Watershed Sourcebook, n.d.)

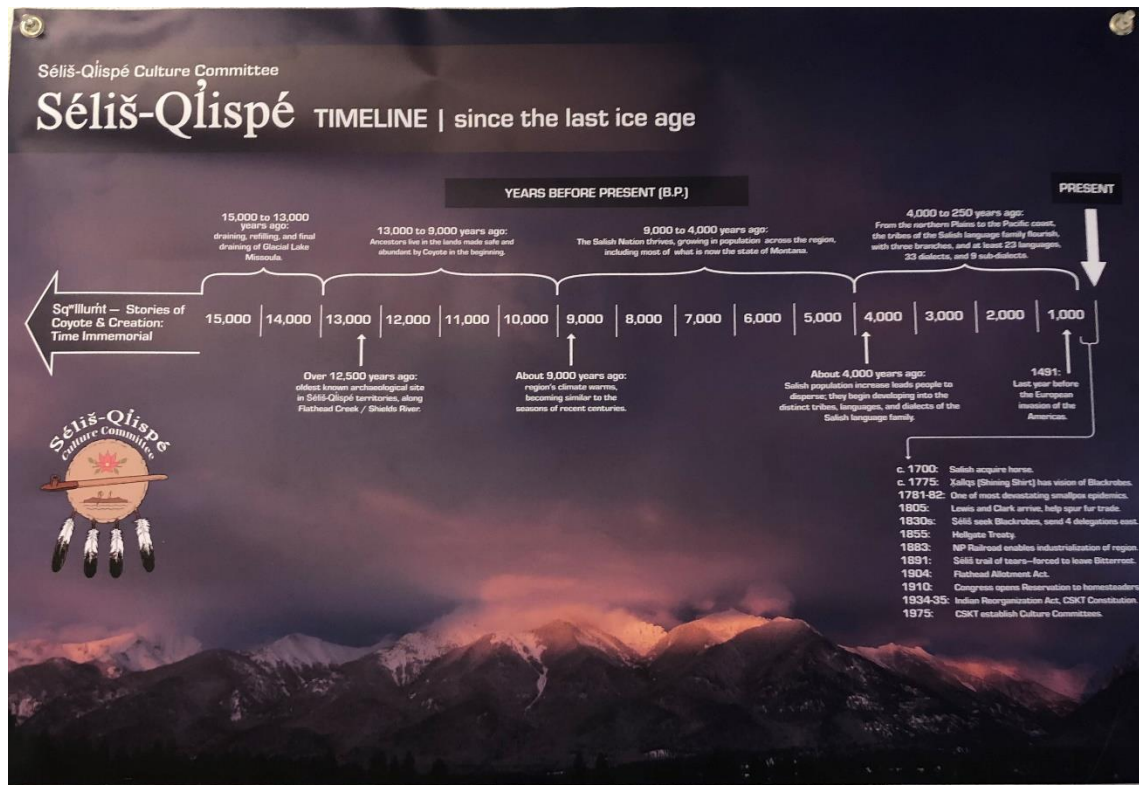


Figure 1.. Diachenko, Elizaveta. Séliš-Qłispé timeline as presented at Séliš-Qłispé Culture Committee. 2019

After the European arrival, the life of these tribes has changed dramatically. 18<sup>th</sup> century brought epidemics of previously unknown diseases from the European settlers, and, according to estimations, half or more than a half of the entire population of Salish and Pend d'Oreille were killed by these new diseases. When the Salish got access to horses, it accelerated both the spread of diseases and intertribal communication. This led to both intertribal marriages and wars, and firearms brought by the settlers intensified intertribal wars. At one point, the Blackfeet, the main enemies of the Salish, were able to wipe out almost all Bitterroot Salish in one of the armed conflicts (Bigart, McDonald 2019).

In the 1820s, following the word of the Salish prophet Shining Shirt, the tribe sought out the Jesuits, not knowing that they would try to convert their entire population into Christianity.

Hellgate treaty between the U.S. government and eighteen tribal members was signed on the 16th of July, 1855, at Council Grove. Initially, this treaty was supposed to establish the Flathead Indian Reservation with headquarters in the Jocko Valley and prevent the cession of certain lands, but due to constant communication problems (translation as well as interpretation of what constitutes a treaty) and the fact that

European settlers had more power in these negotiations, the outcomes of this treaty were disproportionately benefitting the U.S. government. Local tribes believed that this treaty would help them to get protection from the Blackfeet as well as guarantees from the European settlers that they would not abuse their land, while the federal government came to the negotiations trying to contain the Native population on Reservations and claim the land previously used by local tribes. This treaty in itself serves as an example of cultural differences that are tightly connected to language: while the U.S. government did promise to protect the Bitterroot Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai from the Blackfeet and guarantee that they would be able to hunt on certain territories, there was no written agreement solidifying this promise, so the government, in accordance to the Western approach to negotiations and politics prioritizing written agreements to oral ones, avoided the obligation to honor it. Local tribes, however, to this day believe that the U.S. government failed to keep its side of the treaty and betrayed their trust. Another instance of this misunderstanding was the fact that the Bitterroot Salish remained in the Bitterroot Valley, a culturally and spiritually important place for the tribe because they believed that they have the right to do so, while the federal government continued to allow the European settlement in their valley (the land that was supposed to be protected from cession by the Hellgate Treaty) in the 1870s and 1880s, further violating their agreements with the Salish. After 1891, the Bitterroot Salish were forced to leave their sacred valley and join the Flathead Reservation, where they live to this day.

One of the reasons local tribes see this treaty as a betrayal of their trust and abuse of power is the fact that they were historically friendly towards the European settlers, and they expected that in return, the federal government would honor their wishes and respect their way of life and would abstain from forcing the tribes to leave the land they consider to be sacred. According to the Salish people I was able to talk to, even today, they feel betrayed and overlooked by the federal government, and this treaty had a large impact on their community as a whole: while it did unite the community residing on the Reservation, it is also the source of distrust towards many efforts the government proposes to help the tribes preserve and revitalize their cultures and languages, and they tend to rely on their own resources and people as much as possible.

There are many Indigenous communities that feel the same way, and together they seem to have been able to develop a new approach to reclaiming and perpetuating their cultural and linguistic identity, and they tend to support each other in their efforts to

build stronger cultural entities such as committees, schools, curricula introducing their cultures and languages in accordance to the principles of Indigenous methodologies. One of the examples of such support is the constant exchange of ideas, blueprints, and patterns that proved to be successful: the Bitterroot Salish visited with Maori and Hawaiian communities and were able to learn about their language revitalization programs, acquired the necessary knowledge, and are still in touch with them sharing their progress; the Spokane Salish community shares its language materials, such as storybooks and textbooks, with their sister tribe, etc.

According to the most recent census (ACS 2019), the population of the Flathead Reservation is 26, 829. The majority of the population is White (62%), Native Americans of all tribes constitute 26% of the Reservation’s population (Census Reporter, n.d.).

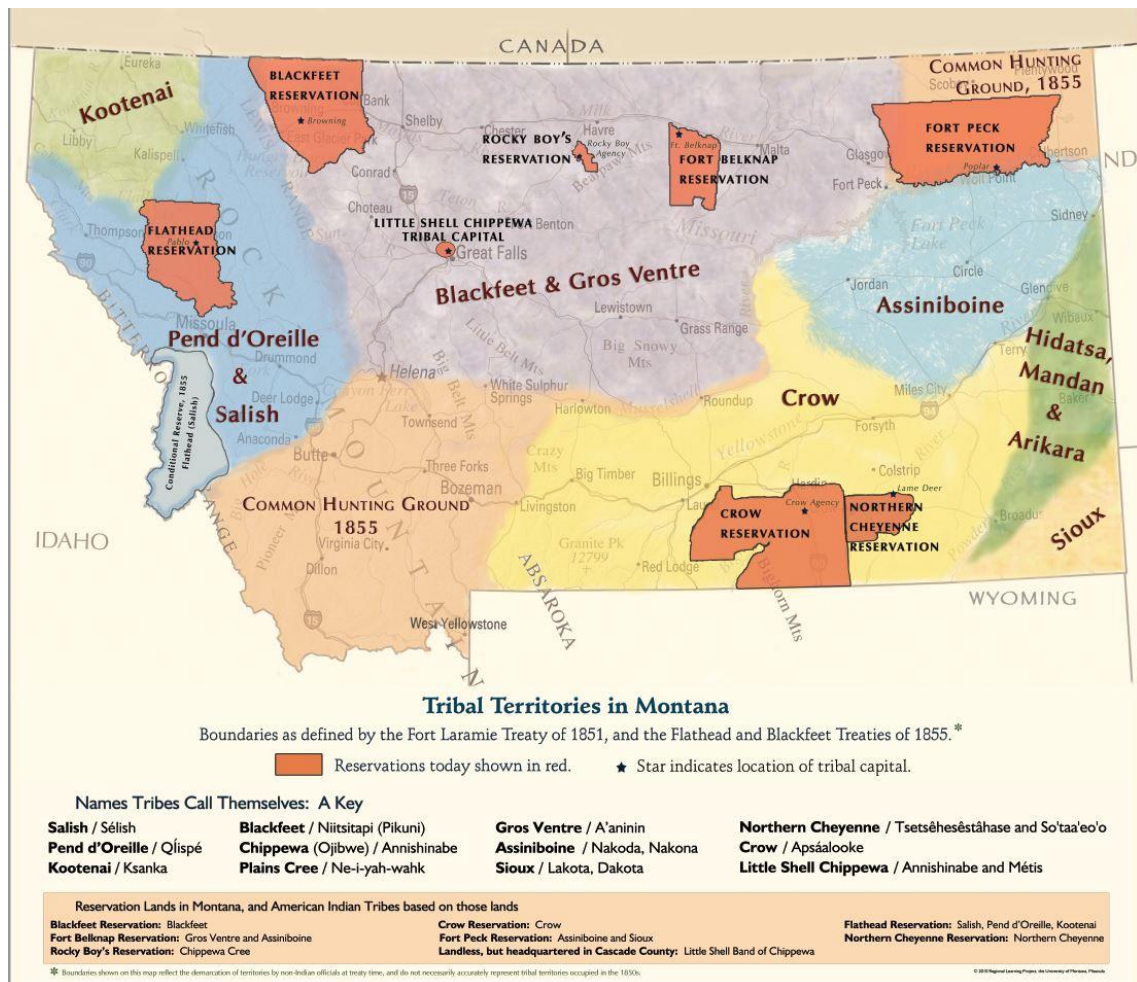


Figure 2. Tribal territories in Montana, [Montana State University](https://www.montana.edu/indianaffairs/)

The focus of my research is the Flathead Indian Reservation of Montana, USA, but more specifically the Bitterroot Salish. The Salish culture, as well as many other Native American cultures, suffered a significant setback in the last two generations: the



traditional question of the culture's "prestige" in "real life" made the Salish, as so many tribes along with them, abandon their language and try to get integrated into the matrix, i.e. English-speaking cultural space as much as possible, so much so that the absolute majority of the Reservation speaks English as its first language. This three-generation gap impacted the culture of the Salish, so the new process of balanced preservation and revitalization exists within the context of reclaiming Native American identity as valid and honorable once again.

Contemporary approach to the Salish language shifted from preservation to a combination of preservation and revitalization, as Séliš-Q̓l̓ispe Culture Committee and Salish Kootenai College, after being in constant communication with tribal Elders, the most important members of the Salish community who have outstanding authority over any processes that take place on the Reservation, decided to emphasize language education in all its aspects: acquisition, teaching, learning, linguistic research, and everyday use.

The example of Bitterroot Salish serves as a gateway to exploring history, challenges, recent success of Indigenous language programs in North America and might serve as an example and inspiration for Indigenous language communities worldwide. Chaney Bell, the language educator at Salish Kootenai College, said that the Salish community is "always looking for new things, they are ready to share what they have with anybody, they know the struggles" that Indigenous communities face. This thesis is an attempt to provide a thorough overview of the subject to the best of my ability and contribute to the conversation about language revitalization movements in general.

The main methods of acquiring information were ethnographic fieldwork and theoretical research. During my fieldwork my main method was participant observation and interviewing without a strict questionnaire, since it could potentially direct the answers and lead the conversation. My goal was to let my interlocutors speak for themselves and emphasize details that they deem the most important.

I chose this subject for my research initially specifically because I knew almost nothing about it, as my primary research interest throughout my life were Finno-Ugric languages and the cultures of my home, Northwestern Russia (see e.g. Siragusa 2018). I wanted to take a step back and see how language revitalization efforts are organized in the country geographically far away, but with similar notions among the majority of

the population regarding Indigenous cultures of the region (indifference, dismissive attitude, assuming the community creates the narrative to get benefits etc.)

To acquire the necessary information, I needed to conduct comprehensive and preferably extensive fieldwork on the Flathead Reservation in Montana, USA, since the information outside the Reservation was scarce and inconclusive. Before embarking on this journey, I needed to familiarize myself with relevant theory (both early and contemporary) in the fields of linguistic anthropology, since my background in linguistics was mostly theoretical, and it was not properly connected to contemporary anthropological theories, to acquire essential knowledge on Native American studies, Indigenous methodologies and connect all this information into a cohesive theoretical framework that would help me direct my attention while conducting my fieldwork. It was also my first independent fieldwork, so I have studied the theory of conducting ethnographic research in order to organize it properly and get the information that emerged in the process.

My first fieldwork took place in January 2020. The second one was more extensive (almost five months), but also more limited than the previous one because of the pandemic. Initial research took place in Bozeman as Montana State University has an extremely good Native American Studies Department specializing in Native American nations of Montana. Most of the students, as well as professors, are themselves Native American and naturally are knowledgeable, and a lot of them were involved very enthusiastically in tribal affairs.

I have read as much as I could on Salish people living in Montana back in Tartu, but there is next to no relevant contemporary literature or articles available online or in our Tartu University Library, and the general overviews I managed to read preparing for my trip were describing some tribes in great detail while barely mentioning the others. Salish from the Flathead Reservation are relatively small in population, so there were not as many articles written about them, as, for example, about Navajo.

One of those interactions led to me being invited to the Native American Students' Association meeting, where I got a chance to meet young Native American students and listen to them discuss their concerns, problems, and political opinions. Their views on the importance of language are reflected in this research.

Listening to the locals proved to be very useful: no books could describe Montana and its inhabitants better than they would themselves. Combined with the fact that a lot of Montanans value privacy and, to some extent, keeping things local, they do not

share their opinions and views on a lot of issues online. As with most communities, the only way to reliably get the information (as much as they would choose) is to be present and talk rather than interview.

I realized that field work is as much about creating connections, networking, and meeting people as it is about studying relevant literature, which was challenging for me because I did not yet have enough experience interviewing, asking the right questions, being a good conversationalist etc. But this initial, “theoretical” phase (since I was mostly studying at the library and reading articles) proved to be crucial for my further research, as I met people that helped me find other relevant people that would be impossible to meet without initial connections. Further fieldwork including trips to the Flathead Reservation was mostly based at Salish Kootenai College and Séliš-Qlispe Culture Committee.

My position as an objective observer was challenged at the very beginning of my fieldwork. Salish community is a welcoming and respectful place where personal stories matter. Their curiosity and genuine interest in my motives, background, and attention to their everyday lives and culture led to a beautiful friendship I cherish. Salish people supported me every step of the way, working overtime and providing any information I would need. I was invited to listen to their stories and participate in their classes not as a passive observer but a friend who wants to tell a story about them to the best of my ability.

It needs to be mentioned that as a visiting researcher, I mostly interacted with the Salish establishment: language educators, prominent members of the community (professors and staff at Salish Kootenai College and SQCC, students obtaining degrees and certificates, etc.). I had a chance to talk to people outside these social groups, but they were limited because of the nature of my research and the pandemic. Under better circumstances, I would have been able to talk to other social groups, but since it was my first fieldwork and it concerned mostly the language education subject, I was presented and introduced to people directly involved in it.

The contemporary field of linguistic anthropology has an abundance of outstanding scholarly works dedicated to language ideologies, language revitalization, preservation, and education. The recent relevant literature recognizes the connections between the Indigenous language revitalization, cultural revival and reestablishing Native American identity and provides a holistic and multi-dimensional set of concepts and discourses that provides their readers with a better and fuller understanding of how

interconnected all fields dedicated to researching and analyzing human existence are. In my research, I heavily rely on Lenore Grenoble, Nicholas McCarty, Paul V. Kroskrity and Margaret C. Field, Lyle Campbell, Thomas Biolsi, Alessandro Duranti, Bernard Spolsky, Laura Siragusa and others.

Modern anthropology sees a surge of Indigenous methodologies, which emerged as a field that is supposed to balance the classic Western approach to conducting research, producing, developing, and interpreting scientific knowledge. Some Indigenous scholars seek to decolonize the fields of study relevant to their existence and experiences, such as linguistics, anthropology, environmental science, psychology, philosophy, etc. Modern Native American scholars are working on developing their own branches of scientific knowledge, moving farther away from the rationalistic positivist approach to science in general, and formulating their own principles of conducting research and finding ways to describing and actualizing Indigenous knowledge in their fields of study. The application of their own worldview in their research, balancing between the requirements of classic academia and the requirements of their community and its ways is a challenge that Indigenous scholars oftentimes struggle with, and the emergence of the field of Indigenous methodology provides them with the framework best suited for their needs.

Modern Indigenous educators widely apply the Indigenous methodology to develop curricula that provide students with both standardized formal education as well as knowledge (including sacred knowledge exclusive to the members of the tribe, nation, etc.) accumulated by the community in a way that is more natural and suitable for them. This includes developing their own way of transmitting knowledge to students, assessing their progress, and encourage further research that would benefit their community.

While working on this thesis, I was invited to audit classes at the Salish Kootenai College, where Dr. Michael Munson introduced me to the field of Indigenous methodology and offered guidance and support in my learning. She directed me towards the literature that could help me understand what Indigenous methodologies are, how to apply them to my research on the revitalization of the Salish language in a holistic way. She carefully explained to me the differences between the all-Western approach to education and the Salish education, which aims to be holistic and community-driven. The literature she recommended to me included essential works of Margaret Kovach, for example, “Indigenous Methodologies,” Lori Lambert’s

“Research for Indigenous Survival: Indigenous research methodologies for the behavioral sciences,” and Sweeney Windchief’s and Timothy San Pedro’s “Applying Indigenous Research Methods (Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education),” and Sandy Grande’s “Red Pedagogy.” It needs to be said, however, that a lot of what I came to understand about Indigenous methodologies comes directly from Dr. Michael Munson, Dr. Walter Fleming, and my interactions with language educators on the Flathead Reservation while I was observing their work and talking to them about their experiences. While auditing Dr. Munson’s classes, I was invited to participate in discussions and welcomed not as an observer, but as a student, so I was able to experience Indigenous approach to studying myself.

First chapter formulates theoretical framework for this thesis and sets the boundaries of this research. It introduces the readers to the concepts in Native American linguistic anthropology that are relevant to this inquiry, discusses applicable theories and formulates terminological framework that will be used in the other chapters to discuss the current situation surrounding the efforts for revitalizing the Salish language on the Flathead Reservation. One subchapter is dedicated to an attempt to briefly introduce the concept of Indigenous methodologies and its main principles as they were presented during audited seminars at Salish Kootenai College and in relevant literature.

Second chapter is dedicated to the issues of research methodology and ethics while conducting research with Indigenous populations, specifically in the United States of America. It describes my experiences as a novice ethnographer conducting her first field work and the policies and processes of tribal approval of the research to be conducted on the territory of the Flathead Reservation.

Third chapter familiarizes the reader with the brief overview of the history of the Native Americans in general and the tribes on Flathead Reservation in particular, and introduces the language situation on the Reservation. It also offers a thorough analysis of contemporary Salish language ideology and its main characteristics. One subchapter is dedicated to the Hellgate treaty that serves as the example of the difference in the Western prioritization of literacy and Native American traditional reliance on oral communication for negotiation, introduces the readers to the language situation on the Reservation and offers an analysis of contemporary Salish language ideology and its main characteristics.

Fourth chapter is dedicated to the Salish language programs on the Flathead Reservation and introduces the readers with the main actors in the efforts of language

revitalization and its specifics as well as presents the results of the field work conducted by me on the Reservation.

## **CHAPTER 1. Theoretical framework**

### **1.1 Terminology**

The terminological framework that is used to describe the processes taking place on Indian Reservations will inevitably vary from case to case since every Reservation's experience is unique. Scholars from different fields of study carefully choose terms that would best apply to the goals of their research and share a valuable critique of existing terms in their papers. For example, in her book *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* (2005), Lenore Grenoble discusses the problematic nature of certain terms. In the context of autochthonous languages, or Indigenous languages, she prefers the term "local language," as this term draws attention towards the fact that language revitalization is tightly connected to a particular geography, and the purpose of language revitalization then is to ensure that this language is more widespread in this particular area (Grenoble 2016: 15). Her research, however, is not centered around Native American communities, which explains the choice of the term. For the purposes of my research geography is less relevant: the dialects of Salish language are spoken across the state and Reservation lines, and the community itself, to my knowledge, does not use this term to describe their language in research papers.

For the same reason, Grenoble prefers the term "language of wider communication" to describe the language that is replacing the "local language." This term, as she describes in the book, is more neutral than other widely used terms, such as "killer language," "dominant language," or some other. She also mentions that some of these terms are not neutral.

For the purposes of my research, I developed the framework which incorporates established terms describing these processes (such as language revitalization, language preservation, language acquisition, Indigenous language, etc.), terms used by the Salish language educators' community (language vitalization, language revival, etc.), and terms found in research papers that describe the situation on the Flathead Reservation. For example, there are several terms that are being used to discuss Native American languages, the most common ones are "heritage language" and "Indigenous language." I use both terms, depending on the context.

A heritage language is a broad term used to describe, in the context of the U.S. languages, languages other than English that are constantly challenged by the ubiquitous nature of English in the U.S.

In my research, heritage language is the language spoken by a community and used locally and is used for transmission of cultural knowledge and intangible heritage. This term is used in contexts describing the acquisition and transmission of a Native American language, its current state, challenges, and efforts to its preservation and revitalization. The term “heritage language” is also suitable for describing language ideologies developed by Native American communities, as it incorporates and directs attention not only towards the language but also to the culture and heritage transmitted by it. As in the context of Salish language revitalization efforts, the language is one of the main devices for transmitting sacred knowledge and inspiring the sense of belonging to the tribe; this term, in my opinion, is appropriate. This term is also used by Margaret C. Field and Paul V. Kroskrity in their book *Native American Language Ideologies: Beliefs, Practices, and Struggles in Indian Country* (2009), as this term accentuates the importance of the language as the heritage of the Native American language community and fits into the context of the development of Native American language ideologies.

An Indigenous language, or autochthonous language, is the language “of or relating to the earliest known inhabitants of a place and especially of a place that was colonized by a now-dominant group.” (Merriam-Webster 2021) In the context of Salish, this term is used to stress that this language has no speakers outside of their language community, unlike heritage languages that often have other language communities elsewhere.

In my research, English is described primarily as a “matrix language,” the term traditionally used in opposition to “embedded language” in the context of code-switching. I use this term to describe English as the language of education, documentation, policymaking, business, media, etc., to avoid the term “dominant language,” which appears to be less neutral in the context of the Salish language revitalization because it accentuates the dynamics of power where the dominant language community has, and chooses to utilize, the means available to break and destroy the heritage language and implies the existence of conscious and continuous efforts to achieve the extinction of the dominated language. In my experience, while it



was the case throughout the history of interactions between the European settlers and Native Americans, the paradigm has shifted dramatically in the new century.

According to my fieldwork and communication with the local population, contemporary attitude (as opposed to the attitude prevalent throughout the history of the European settlement in America) towards the Salish language in Montana is hardly aggressive (there are exceptions): it could be described as mostly indifferent or dismissive, and, in rare cases, supportive and sympathetic. I prefer the term “matrix” language while discussing English in this case because, in the contemporary context, this is the language surrounding the Flathead Reservation and dominating inside the Flathead Reservation without using any explicit and conscious application of force, but even without explicitly aggressive language policies English, as any language, introduces a certain version of language-described reality in which Indigenous peoples – in my case the Salish, although there are a lot of Native American tribes in Montana and even on the Flathead Reservation – are nowadays born to think, learn and create. As described by the Salish themselves, English is a ubiquitous and invisible force that puts boundaries on explicitly Salish cultural contexts and meanings. Inspired by Antonio Gramsci’s work on hegemony (Gramsci 1971), I will, where appropriate, refer to English also as a hegemonic language, as it in its contemporary state continues to have an unparalleled amount of power, and there is no longer need to enforce it through violence or open discrimination. This, however, does not suggest that its dominance does not have any negative effects on Indigenous population of the US, but stresses that these effects nowadays are achieved without the use of explicit force.

## **1.2 Language endangerment, loss, and death**

Before discussing the particulars of Salish language ideology and contemporary revitalization efforts, it is important to describe the modern state of the language and assess it on an appropriate scale. This scale should ideally incorporate all important aspects of language's existence and be reliable enough to be applicable more or less universally. In the context of language revitalization, assessment should be centered around the number of speakers, surrounding languages, intergenerational transmission and its representation in education (formal and other). After careful research of the matter, I chose Grenoble's classification of language endangerment, because it takes all these aspects into consideration. This classification is used as a reference throughout this research, so I believe it is important to include it here and place the Salish language in it.

According to Grenoble, the classification of language endangerment looks like this:

### **1. Safe**

Languages in this category are actively used by all generations of speakers; their speakers occupy large domains territorially and culturally. These languages are capable of serving all contexts and domains; these are languages of education, government, business, etc. Grenoble mentions that these languages often "enjoy official status within nation-states," which secures their position as "high prestige" languages. These languages are usually the most influential matrix languages, so they are capable of expanding while absorbing smaller language communities with the widespread media and compulsory education in the official language. These languages have accumulated a certain amount of power that ensures their hegemonic status if engaged in power relationships with the smaller languages (heritage languages, Indigenous languages, etc.)

### **2. At risk**

These languages are in a similar position to safe languages, but they lack at least one of the properties of the first group. For example, even though their speakers' numbers are not shrinking, these languages are not used in all imaginable contexts, have limited governmental representation, considered to be a diaspora language, etc.

### **3. Disappearing**

Languages with a broken or interrupted intergenerational transmission, with ever-shrinking language usage contexts, are considered to be disappearing, as the matrix language poses a risk to their existence with its ubiquitous presence and appeal to the younger generation. At this stage, no aggressive intervention of the matrix language is necessary to facilitate the process of disappearing.

#### 4. Moribund

Moribund languages are the languages that are not taught to the children of the language group, which means the intergenerational language bond is no longer keeping the language alive without continuous and conscious efforts to its revitalization. At this stage, a lot of language communities recognize the situation and start creating language programs and invite linguists to their community (if they can) in the hope that this will stop the process of language death, as the shift to the matrix language becomes very apparent to the language community. This is what continues to happen to Native American languages in Montana: no conscious efforts are made to enforce the English language use on the Flathead Reservation's population, and without previous attempts to make these languages disappear through boarding schools and social conditioning the Salish language could potentially stay at this stage.

#### 5. Nearly extinct

When the language is no longer transmitted within the community, and only several people can speak the language (usually people from the older generations with no teaching experience), there are no new speakers, and no efforts are made to actively revitalize the language, it is considered to be nearly extinct.

#### 6. Extinct

Languages become extinct when no language speakers remain.

By my estimate, the Salish language on the Flathead Reservation is, in its contemporary position, moribund. Language educators on the Flathead seem to agree with my assessment, and some put the Salish language into the "nearly extinct" group. I disagree with this assessment, because nowadays there are a lot of efforts to revitalize their language, including recent development of associate degree at Salish Kootenai College, but I understand and include their assessment, since they conducted their own research and use specific terms as a part of their language ideology (in this case, I believe, the goal is to reinforce the sense of urgency in efforts to revitalize their language).

### 1.3 Language revitalization and preservation

Language preservation, according to David Leedom Shaul, is a process formulated and implemented according to principles of descriptive linguistics (as opposed to theoretical linguistics). It is a process of recording the language in its putative entirety in the state it is currently in and it became one of the most important linguistic endeavors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It provided the scholars with the opportunity to utilize all media available to them, from written speech to audio- and visual recordings of people speaking the preserved language. This process is closely related to concepts of language loss, language endangerment and language obsolescence, since scholars mostly assumed that preserved heritage languages could and most probably will die, or transfer into the state of sleeping or dormant language at best.

The standard procedure for Native American language preservation consisted of three aspects: developing a grammar that would describe how the given language works, making a dictionary of retrieved words that would preserve the existing lexicon, and record in writing or with any media available set of texts which are often mythological and thus reflecting a specific register. This three-part language preservation “package” made sure that the basics of the endangered language would be at least preserved in the state it was discovered by the scholars.

First attempts in describing grammar were of little to no use to the Native American communities as linguistic lingo is unfamiliar to the absolute majority of the population. Therefore, the community can not utilize these grammars to at least adopt it to be used in language education. Shaul believes that “using standard linguistic lingo is another form of cultural oppression” (Shaul 2014:13). I do not think that the term “oppression” would be the most appropriate as it implies that scholars do it consciously and seek to restrict access to collected material. I agree, however, that collected material must be recorded in such a way that the community can use them if they choose to do so, and that this kind of research should always keep the community’s needs in focus. I agree with Shaul when he states that it is very important to “bridge the gap of academia and the real world of native persons.” (Shaul 2014: 13)

One of the main problems with language preservation is that “preservation” usually refers to “writing down” in some form. Native Americans do value spoken language over written, and it needs to be taken into account. While written materials provide educators with the source they can use for language teaching, it can overlook the

context of heritage language use important for the community. He argues with Grenoble and Whaley's statement that "even small-scale local literacy can have profound effects on how a language is viewed, and even programs that are relatively unsuccessful in creating domains for the use of literacy can be effective in destigmatizing a local language." (Grenoble, Whaley 2006: 117) He sees it as a threat to the communities whose linguistic ideology values oral speech to the written one, and that it might add contexts of language use unnatural to these communities. This argument, in my opinion, is valid and important. However, for the purposes of the Salish language, it appears that their community already has been introduced to written speech and adopted it to their needs and values, so Grenoble and Whaley's statement is applicable to this particular case: the Salish language is being successfully used as a prestigious and exclusive secret language by the younger generation on social media, and the Salish take great pride in being able to put their placenames on road signs and establishments. These examples should not be ignored and need to be mentioned in these discussions.

Language preservation is a very important step to language revitalization, as contemporary world that Native Americans navigate in is as much a written speech world as it is oral speech world. The importance of being able to use their languages on social media, in written documents that "officialize" their heritage language seems to have a profound positive effect on the communities' attitude towards it. For example, I have heard that the Blackfeet already use their language as an official language, and that the Salish establishment (educators, politicians and other officials that are involved in tribal policymaking) and students who I had a chance to talk to express hope that their language would soon develop something similar, so according to their (establishment) language ideology seems to welcome written Salish as an official language. This, however, does not mean that it is true for other communities.

Shaul formulated several outcomes that are possible, depending on the linguistic ideology of the community, methods of revitalization, funding and other resources (staff), the current state of the speech community:

1. Linguistic appreciation
2. The local school as a speech community
3. School-home interaction as the basis of a speech community
4. Metropolitan use of heritage language
5. Latin-like revitalization

## 6. Complete restoration (Shaul 2014:32)

It would appear that, in its contemporary state, the Salish community is working its way through this list from the first to forth, trying to work in several direction in order to ensure constant progress. It takes necessary steps to ensure the language is used at schools and encourages its use at home and outside of education institutions, puts placenames and signs in their heritage language to inspire people to reconnect with it. There are books being published every year, board games are being developed in order to facilitate language learning at any age and engage students in language education while keeping it entertaining and inspiring for them. As far as I was able to understand from interacting with language educators and students, their goal is to make their language a part of everyday Salish experience, so that people would use their heritage language everywhere they go and in as many contexts and situations as they can. Their ambitious plans are backed up by the unanimous support of the community and motivation of relevant institutions to invest money into the development of Salish language education programs on the Flathead Reservation. They welcome good faith researchers on their territory and are willing to exchange ideas and learn from anybody who presents them with relevant advice and guidance (e.g. Maori, Hawaiians).

According to Grenoble, one of the main reasons for language revitalization is the fact that minorities are getting recognized within modern nation-states, and with that, getting empowered to pursue their cultural, social, and political goals. The Salish, inspired by the success of language revitalization programs of Maori and Hawaiians and their positive influence on Indigenous cultures and their self-recognition as a cohesive group, made a decision to pursue language revitalization and, through these efforts, reach cultural revitalization as well.

Revitalizing is conceptually different but almost always relies heavily on the materials of the process of language preservation, and it is natural to come to an assumption of a form of hierarchy between the two: historically, minority languages were first preserved by professional linguists whose job was to capture the language in its current state, which would almost always mean documenting it, which means putting it into written form. This means creating grammars, orthographies, and vocabularies that reflect the current state of the language that would, ideally, aid students who wish to master it.

Sacralization is a very frequent result of any language preservation efforts (Whittaker 2008: 334). It happens when the heritage language has only survived in old

folk songs, ceremonial chants, stories, spells, etc. This means that the heritage language lacks immediate access to its own relevant contemporary lexicon or does not have it at all, could not have necessary structures and words to describe the current, and with that establishes its place primarily as a sacred language.

Sacred language is the language that is only used in sacred events, important for the spiritual life of the community, such as ceremonies, rituals, and festivals – and otherwise sacred events that are registered as such by the language community (hunting, crafting of certain items, going to sleep, or waking up, etc.). Usually, the everyday use of the sacred language is discouraged by the Elders or the community as a whole.

Revitalization of the heritage language usually incorporates sacred contexts, but it also features a contemporary, mundane lexicon that serves the community on a daily basis. This is why contemporary efforts in language revival are usually based on a mixed approach: language preservation stage provides the Indigenous community with a basic structure that later can be tailored to fit the needs of this particular language community, facilitation language revitalization efforts like language nests, immersion schools, language educators programs, etc.

Some researchers believe this approach to targeted language revitalization stems from the European understanding what the language is and what is the difference between the dialect and the language, and it is being used as a tool for a European-style nation-building process that could potentially be foreign to Indigenous communities. They believe this approach uses Western procedures for creating a nation and legitimizing it with teacher licensing and school curricula development. (Biolsi, Collins 2004) While I do not disagree with this statement, I came to understand that the Bitterroot Salish and, more broadly, the Salish communities made a decision to move in the direction of the language ideology prioritizing language revitalization and legitimization by balancing Indigenous approaches and traditional ways of knowing and existing with contemporary power structures that would empower its members to achieve success of the local community and stay understood and recognized in their state as a reliable and trustworthy producer of young professionals equipped with equal opportunities with their non-tribal peers. While it would appear that the Bitterroot Salish community has to stay limited by the demands and requirements of the local and federal government, their aim is to empower its members to be successful members

not only of their local community, but anywhere they would choose to pursue their careers and interests.

This approach has a very important advantage when utilized in the processes of developing Indigenous language policy: when the community chooses to utilize Western-presented licensing and certification requirements and adapt them to their own needs, it seems to have a profound effect on the overall prestige of the Indigenous language. For the younger generation, this language becomes an official recognized language that can be taught, learned and used as widely as English in their community, and it has its designated place in the tapestry of recognized languages of the world that are being professionally taught and used. There are job prospects, economic incentive and the pride that comes from the official recognition. While this approach is only applicable for the community that seeks to include its language into the public classroom and workplace, it is, in my opinion, one of the most productive ways of building the community and developing a strong sense of belonging among its members.

D.L. Shaul in his book *Linguistic Ideologies of Native American Language Revitalization: Doing the Lost Language Ghost Dance* (2014) offers this distinction between two terms that are sometimes used interchangeably – language revitalization and language revival: “It is important at this point to distinguish between language revitalization, which assumes that there are actual speakers of a language, and language revival, which assumes that there are no speakers of a heritage language. Revitalization is often used as a cover term for revival, but the distinction has important consequences for how a heritage language is approached.” (Shaul 2014: 31) I have heard Salish language educators (among others, one of my main tutors on the matter, Dr. Michael Munson) calling their efforts “language revival” rather than “language revitalization”, which, following this definition, would help understand what the language educator community believes is happening to their heritage language.

The fact that the “language revitalization after language preservation” approach is currently prevalent does not mean, however, that language revitalization must be based on the language preservation approach first in order to be successful. Contemporary language revival movements usually choose the mixture of the two in order to achieve tangible goals.

In the Salish case, both processes are taken into consideration, and means for language revitalization inevitably need interference from the language maintenance



approach to compete with the matrix language. For example, language revitalization usually includes some form of language nests, where students interact exclusively in the heritage language without any additions from the matrix one. These nests serve two purposes: create an atmosphere of exclusivity (matrix language is deliberately excluded from classwork and communication between students during studies) and gently enforce casual communication in heritage language without any additions from the matrix one.

Whereas I understand and agree with the critique of existing terms for matrix and minority languages (see Grenoble 2016: 14), I believe that in the case of the Salish language terms “matrix language” and opposing “Indigenous,” “minority,” “heritage,” and “Native American” language serve the purpose of describing the situation in the most in the most precise way.

For example, stories shared by the Salish nowadays through any kind of media (books, webpages, videos etc.) are mostly created in English since the absolute majority of the Salish speak English as their first language. Describing Indigenous culture, sharing culturally important stories in matrix language means adapting them to the English language, inevitably losing several layers of context and additional, indescribable in English meanings.

#### **1.4 Native American language ideologies**

In the book *Native American Language Ideologies: Beliefs, Practices, and Struggles in Indian Country* (2009), M.C. Field and P.V. Kroskrity describe language ideology as “beliefs and feelings about the language and discourse that are possessed with speakers and their speech communities.” (Field, Kroskrity 2009: 4) This definition is applicable to my research and will be used as a basis for my description of the Bitterroot Salish community’s language ideologies, as it avoids broad generalizations and gives enough space to determine and describe the diversity of linguistic ideologies even within one Native American community.

Linguistic ideologies do not have, nor are they usually, strictly formulated and implemented. Oftentimes they are not conscious, coherent, or even shared unanimously inside a given Native American community. As Kroskrity and Field put it in the introduction to their book, “American Indian language ideologies not only are historically very different from each other but today, *even within a single community*,

are typically complex, heterogeneous, contradictory, and even contentious.” (Field, Kroskrity 2009: 7, *their italics*) This means that there cannot be one unifying linguistic ideology that would serve or describe all Native American communities, and therefore the focus of this research is to describe and analyze linguistic ideologies of one given language group – the Bitterroot Salish of the Flathead Reservation. This distinction needs to be made because linguistic ideologies of Spokane Salish, as close as they might be to the Bitterroot Salish community, manifest themselves differently and developed under different historical circumstances. The fact that tribes constantly exchange information and tools for language revitalization (which is widely but not universally understood by the Native American communities to be the primary paradigm to reestablishing and inspiring widespread heritage language use) does not mean that these devices and tools are used to formulate, develop, and implement same linguistic ideologies.

Michael Silverstein defines language ideology as the “set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use.” (Silverstein 1979: 193). It is essential to mention, however, that in its contemporary state language ideology in the context of Salish and their language also means the adopted approach to perceiving their heritage and the place of the Salish language on the Flathead Reservation.

Alan Rumsey describes language ideologies thus: “shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world.” (Rumsey 1990: 346) Kroskrity and Field argue, however, that this definition offers limitations to language ideological variation while promoting a generalized view on language inside Indigenous communities. I agree with this critique because even in the relatively small Bitterroot Salish community there are several language ideologies that are being developed by different bodies. For example, while most of the people who I was able to talk to agreed that the Salish language is an important part of the Salish culture, there are lots of differences in terms of language use and language teaching. While some Salish Elders agree that Salish should once again become the language of everyday use, even if it means it changes its form in one way or another, some of them share a more conservative point of view and believe that the language should be preserved the way it used to be (in the form that was recorded during the initial language preservation phase), and that Salish should abstain from adopting concepts and structures of the matrix language.

Salish language educators, as far as I was able to understand, take a more neutral stance on the matter, and some of them agree to accept the emergence of slang if it means that the language is being used in everyday speech – Salish language gains momentum and leaves the classroom. The younger generation widely accepts the importance of the Salish language as a marker of their cultural and ethnic identity that promotes its exclusivity and offers an opportunity to distance themselves from a largely homogenized “American” identity. This group welcomes its use in everyday speech, using it as an exclusive and secret language on social media, as noted above, and oftentimes treats their heritage language as a political and cultural statement. This language ideology is widely described in literature discussing the Native American ideologies of communication. For example, Basso (1979) and Trechter (2001) directly point at the connection between language ideology and political ideology and identity construction: heritage language is perceived as a marker and a powerful statement of opposition to “European,” Euro-American, “other” and homogenized “American.”

### **1.5 Indigenous Methodologies**

Before Western influence became so ubiquitous, Native American communities had their own ways of doing most things, including science, technology, storytelling, and education, and all of it was cohesive and served as well as formed the needs of the community. In the modern world, however, in order to be recognized by other scholars and the general public, Indigenous scholars are forced to adapt their own ways of knowing and doing things, including research and scholarly work, to fit the Western academic standards. This oftentimes means trying to fit acquired knowledge into written form, analyze and measure collected material by rationalistic metrics, and trying to fit their work into the existing Western body of knowledge. Since Native American ways of doing things, including science and education, developed in isolation from the European context, their approach to scientific inquiry was historically dismissed and discouraged in Western academia.

Modern science, however, seeks to be more diverse and include all the ways of acquiring and processing knowledge in order to get as much information and be as precise as possible. The emergence of tribal colleges ensured that Indigenous scholars would have their own space for acquiring and developing knowledge with as much or

as little Western influence as they see appropriate. As put by L.A. Grenoble and L.J. Waley in their article *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* (2005), “globalizing forces have triggered reacting forces as some people seek to assert, or better to reassert, their unique cultural identity. More often than not, this effort to underscore uniqueness is represented by a “traditionalist” constituency within a community that finds itself interacting with a “modernizing” constituency that advocates greater integration with a regional, national, or international community.” (Grenoble, Waley 2015:3) This is also true for deglobalizing education: local communities, in this case, Native Americans, try to resist the homogenization of education because, in the contemporary world, it would mean the persistent dominance of the Western view on what education is and how it should be conducted, which would lead to the gradual loss of Indigenous ways of knowing and transmitting knowledge.

It is vital to place oneself in any research: while conducting interviews, I was encouraged to exchange stories rather than collect them. They show a lot of interest in my stories, and some of them (Joyce Silverthorne, Michael Munson, Rene Dubay, etc.) told me that my stories are a gift to them.

One of the main principles that Michael Munson explained to me was “doing things in a good way”. For the purposes of showing this principle in action I chose conducting research as an example, but it applies to everything connected to the Indigenous communities, from educating to business development. This term incorporates a lot of things, but the main ones are these:

1. Placing yourself

Indigenous methodologies stray away from the principle of objectivity and objective observation. It is understood that any research is not an objective description and analysis of reality but rather a story heard, collected, and retold by a researcher-storyteller. According to Indigenous methodology, a researcher needs to tell their story and properly introduce him- or herself to the community so that they would understand who will be telling the story about them. Placing yourself and telling your story before expecting interviewees to share theirs is believed to be necessary for conducting research in a good way.

2. Being respectful

Being respectful in Indigenous methodology means to understand what impact their research might have on the community. It means to be mindful of this impact (which is believed to be the result of any human interaction in

general) and make sure that the trust of the community will not be betrayed. It also means to avoid trying to forcefully put acquired information into unnecessary classifications and overanalyze it to make it suitable for Western academia. It is believed that this adaptation misinterprets sharing the knowledge in general since it puts the information in categories that might not present it in a way it was transmitted or meant.

### 3. Maintaining self-awareness

Taking the previous principles into account, the researcher should repeatedly stop and take the time for self-reflection. Asking yourself the right questions (“Am I doing this in a good way and in good faith?”) leads to the right outcomes. Self-reflection is one of the tools to place yourself in research and keep the focus.

### 4. Keeping the community in mind

After a thorough self-reflection, researchers usually find themselves in a position where they have the power over the narrative of the research. In order to avoid the abuse of trust and misuse of acquired knowledge, the researcher must always think of the community where he or she conducts research and make sure that they do not take a consumerist approach to it and give the results back to the community and, if possible, provide tools for implementing them in their lives.

## **CHAPTER 2. Research methodology and ethics**

The primary method for acquiring material for the present thesis is my fieldwork in Montana, specifically on the Flathead Reservation. I organized two trips, the first one for acquiring initial information in 2019, and the second one is to participate in classes and further research the subject in 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I was able to extend my fieldwork and managed to essentially be in touch with the Salish language educators' community for almost five months, and since most of their classes took place on Zoom, I was able to participate in as many as I was allowed to. I conducted a series of interviews and also researched available talks, lectures, and presentations given by people who created the Salish Language Education programs: Dr. Michael Munson, Chaney Bell, Steve (Stipi) Arca, Melanie (Milani) Sandoval, Rosemary (Rosie) Matt, etc. Dr. Munson allowed me to audit her classes on Indigenous methodologies, and Melanie (Milani) Sandoval allowed me to observe her Salish language classes.

One of the main discoveries I made while conducting my fieldwork in Montana was the struggle of an inexperienced scholar conducting field research in a tight-knit isolated community. Educated, until my M.A. studies, in a more or less positivistic way, I was overwhelmed by the number of contexts that disrupt any attempts of classification and putting them into a neat system that I initially wanted to present in this thesis. I was inspired by the idea of an "outside perspective," thinking that my status as an impartial observer of things happening on the Reservation in a foreign country would make me immune to any preconceived notions, judgments, and prejudice. It was not the case.

One of the main challenges was my lack of experience conducting fieldwork in general: while being fully prepared to promise and keep my promise to be respectful, tactful, and never abuse the Salish community's trust, I have not been familiar with the official procedure of the tribal approval. Both Sél̓iš-Q̓lispé Culture Committee (SQCC) and Salish Kootenai College (SKC) have official forms that I needed to fill out, courses on ethics I needed to pass, and certificates I was required to obtain. Both institutions were willing to approve my research on the Flathead Reservation, but due to the pandemic, the process became complicated: we needed to ensure the safety of everyone involved, so it took more time than usual for the official approval, and while waiting for it, I was working on my theoretical framework and audited classes.

This process is vital to the Salish because there were many instances where scholars and researchers would abuse the trust of the tribe and use valuable information collected on the Reservation for financial or professional benefit without taking the needs of the tribe into account. I have heard stories about people learning about Salish medicine, philosophy, religion, and culture, and then selling products that were produced according to the Salish traditions and sacred knowledge without asking permission or serving the community that shared its secrets with an outsider. These instances forced SQCC and SKC to make sure this would never happen again, and now all research proposals need to be approved by these institutions. Another thing that had to be done is the restriction of access to certain subjects taught at SKC for non-tribal students, and now newer programs concerning cultural studies and language are divided into two separate groups: one with general access for everybody interested in Salish culture and language and the second one with restricted access. In this program, chosen (presumably tribal) students are being taught the sacred knowledge along with the language and culture.

After obtaining both institutions' approval, I interviewed the key people connected to the efforts directed towards the Salish language and culture's preservation and revitalization. Among others, I interviewed Joyce Silverthorne, a certified teacher and administrator, retired Director of the Tribal Education Department for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, now a policy advisor at OPI (Montana Office of Public Instruction), Michael Munson, the person working on Native Language Teacher Education (NLTE), Salish Language Educator Development (SLED), Culture and Language Studies (CALs), Native American Studies & Division of Education at Salish Kootenai College, Dr. Joe McDonald, the retired President of Salish Kootenai College, and Sandra Boham, current President of Salish Kootenai College, etc.

Due to the pandemic, I had to conduct my interviews through Zoom, which had an impact on the results of the present research: while I was able to record most of the meetings, I think that meeting these people in person would have been an even bigger privilege. There are a lot of things that cannot be transmitted via Zoom: the decorations and ambiance of my interviewees' spaces, the ease of the conversation between two people sitting in the same room discussing important matters without feeling that they are on a yet another Zoom meeting that feels unnatural and unusual. The Internet, as much as it helped during this pandemic, can not replace in-person communication.

After my first visit, I left with a big list of literature recommended to me during casual conversations, I received countless presents from the community, from books to board games. One of the most important people I have met on the Flathead Reservation has given me a bag full of herbs and sage, along with a long and carefully braided sweetgrass, and I was trying to give gifts myself to do things in a good way. None of this is possible through the Internet, and so I believe that the outcomes of my fieldwork, as outstanding as I see them to be, could be so much more impactful if we would not be forced to meet through the Internet.



### CHAPTER 3. History of Native American languages in the U.S.

In order to understand contemporary methodology for language revitalization on the Flathead Reservation, it is important to put these efforts into a larger context. To achieve this goal, I present relevant information and analysis concerning the history of Native American languages in the United States of America.

Terrence G. Wiley, utilizing the data provided by the recent census, places the approximate number of Native American languages at 169 and approximately 397,000 speakers of the 6.7 million Indigenous population of North America and Canada. (Wiley 2014: 189)

According to T.L. McCarty, several things set Native American languages apart from other heritage languages of the U.S. First and foremost, these languages are autochthonous, which means that, unlike heritage languages of the immigrants to the U.S., they do not have other countries and communities in other parts of the world who could ensure that these languages would continue to exist regardless of what happens with their communities in America. Russian, Spanish, German, and other more prominent language communities in the U.S. do have entire countries of people speaking their language overseas, and Native Americans only have their land on the continent to ensure its survival.

For example, suppose Russian-speaking immigrants would choose not to teach their heritage language to their children and would only use English as their language of everyday communication. In that case, Russian Federation has more than a hundred million people to speak the Russian language continuously; they have their own country with education systems created specifically for the Russian-speaking community. It is not only the number of people who can speak Russian; it is also the fact that the entire system with all its language and cultural policies works to ensure the ubiquitous presence of Russian on its territory. Native American communities, on the other hand, are forced to exist and navigate in English language-dominated spaces. Federal policies offer little help to ensure the survival of Indigenous languages. In other words, Native American language communities navigate indifferent to hostile language environments of English dominance, and the sense of urgency to preserve and revitalize their heritage languages rises proportionally to the decline of Native American language speakers' numbers.

The autochthonous status of Native American languages means that they are very susceptible to endangerment, and external force of any kind (from violent to soft and decentralized, cultural to physical and psychological) has the capacity of inflicting a disproportional amount of damage to these languages. One of the forces that are understood to be one of the main reasons for Native American languages' transmission's three-generation gap was boarding schools. Multi-dimensional and methodically organized violence that took place in these schools not only made it impossible to speak an Indigenous language in any space outside of the family (and sometimes even in the family), but it discouraged several generations of Native Americans from transmitting their heritage languages to their young. Trying to avoid their boarding school experience happening to their children and to help them succeed, parents would stop speaking their heritage language in hopes that their descendants will escape the violence that they had to go through and achieve success in the matrix culture outside of the Reservations (Shaul 2014).

The autochthonous status of Native American languages also makes it vital to ensure intergenerational transmission. Another thing that is unique to Native American heritage languages is the fact that Native American cultures traditionally heavily rely on oral communication, as was mentioned earlier, and oral transmission of information, unlike most immigrant heritage languages like Spanish or Russian. This cultural focus on orality has its advantages and disadvantages in the contemporary field of Indigenous language revitalization.

Oral transmission-based language communities ensure intergenerational communication, which is extremely important for any cultural processes in small Native American communities. It creates isolated and exclusive cultural spaces for them to engage in their everyday and sacred practices.

The mirrored experience of linguistic endangerment and revitalization is most apparent when it comes to writing and written speech in general. It is safe to say that the introduction of the Western version of written communication facilitated both Native American languages' endangerment and contemporary preservation/revitalization.

Shaul describes several reasons for language endangerment and loss in Native American communities. One of them is the "wholesale adoptions of institutions (government, school, church) from the dominant culture" (Shaul 2014: 5). While I agree with this statement, I intend to take this idea one step further: I believe that it is

not only institutions adopted by the Native Americans, but rather the Western institutional way of “doing things,” as described by the Salish. All mentioned institutions have one crucial feature in common: all of them are written-speech dominant spaces, where important information and relevant, everyday speech is transmitted primarily through writing. Written sources, teaching and learning materials, and assessments used by schools and churches, all communication with any European (meaning non-Native American) institutions, take place in the context of written speech. This approach to the transmission of information forced Native American communities without established writing systems that would be understood outside of their language community to adopt not only European institutions but also the way of interacting with information. Adoption of these institutions ensured that the written transmission would be conducted in English rather than the Indigenous community’s heritage language. This shift triggered a highly complex chain of events leading to Native American languages’ endangerment.

Introduction to the English language as interlanguage made it possible for Native Americans to communicate with other tribes without learning each other’s languages or using their previously established lingua franca, and their children, for several reasons, would more often speak English. Gradually, generation after generation, the contexts in which their heritage language is used would shrink dramatically, sometimes only spoken in ritual contexts. Children would enter English-dominant spaces where their heritage language is never used, further limiting its already limited use. After leaving their heritage-language space, they would rarely connect with the Elders and their community.

According to Shaul, prestige plays a significant role in heritage language endangerment, especially after 1970 (Shaul 2014: 37). The ubiquitous nature of contemporary American media explains its considerable impact on all language communities worldwide, and its prestige experiences consistent and rampant growth. However, it is even more prominent in the U.S., where Native American communities are forced to either create their own media to try balancing the prevalence of English-speaking media with their heritage language. This proves to be gradually more and more challenging of a task because contemporary media has moved to the written form rather than visual as it was before people got unlimited access to the Internet. Most of the information that the younger generation gets is delivered through social media, and interactions with peers usually rely on exchanging written messages.

As I mentioned before, introduction to writing in its Western form facilitated both Native American languages' endangerment and current efforts to revitalize them. The process of language preservation that took place in the middle of the 20th century was made possible by the methodical use of written speech. Native American communities would put much effort to write down and document all speech in their heritage languages as carefully as they could, and they would often invite professionals (linguists, language educators, etc.) to help facilitate this process. One of the most successful examples would be Indrek Park, a scholar putting outstanding effort in preserving and revitalizing Mandan language. These archives then would be used as materials for developing textbooks, dictionaries, storybooks, songbooks; linguists would describe heritage languages' grammar and develop unique writing systems based on Latin letters. All these efforts initially utilize the Western approach to language transmission in order to make sure that the language is carefully preserved in its current state, and this is widely considered to be the first step to heritage language revitalization, as it has to be able to survive in the contemporary context of written-speech dominance.

The next step to language revitalization is to create heritage language spaces where community members can speak Native American languages without using English. Pioneered by Samoans, Maoris, and Hawaiians, language nests are routinely used as a tool of language education as well as an initial introduction to their tangible and intangible heritage. According to First Peoples' Cultural Council, "Language Nest[s]... allow communities to create language immersion spaces where young children can naturally learn their language as a mother tongue. Children are immersed in the language, and parents are encouraged to participate while staff, volunteers, and Elders carry out daily activities in the language with the children. Language Nests also create opportunities for young parents to revitalize a language by learning it themselves and incorporating it into their daily lives" (First Peoples' Cultural Council, n.d.). These language nests are usually organized as preschool programs on Indian Reservations and serve local communities and families.

After establishing language nests and ensuring that the language is reasonably preserved in its current form, tribes oftentimes would observe the results of this language immersion and gradually develop programs that serve the purpose of language revitalization, incorporating Indigenous methodologies into Western education. This usually means that language educators would start developing

language programs for local schools, create unique spaces for heritage language use. However, this is true only if the heritage language community decides not to limit the use of their language to sacred events and ceremonies and encourages its use in mundane contexts as well.

The order in which these language revitalization efforts take place is not consistent, as each tribe decides for itself what parts of their heritage should be protected first. Some would prioritize the language and some other aspects of tangible and intangible heritage. Most of the tribes, however, see education as the primary tool for preserving and engaging with their cultures.

Many Reservations in the U.S. establish their tribal colleges that have unprecedented control over their curricula. This stems from the tribes' realization of the previous problematic attempts to revitalize the language and reflects their changing views on shaping and preserving their Indigenous cultures and heritage. For example, on the Flathead Reservation of Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in Montana, USA, tribal members established their own Salish Kootenai College, which offers degrees in fields relevant for this particular Reservation rather than providing general standard education curricula. All degrees awarded at this College are supposed to be put to use on the Reservation and serve the local community.

The language of education, however, is still English, as there are, according to Joyce Silverthorn<sup>1</sup>, approximately 90 people who are able to speak some Salish and about 180 of those who understand bits and pieces. According to Melanie Sandoval, none of the existing programs provide language fluency, and students graduating from the SLED program obtain B2 level at most (my assessment based on the description of the desired outcome). According to the students that shared their experiences with me, during their first year, they can only speak "like a four-year-old child."

---

<sup>1</sup> A certified teacher and administrator, Joyce Silverthorne retired as the Director of the Tribal Education Department for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation in 2007 and is now a policy advisor at OPI. Over the years, she has made an enormous contribution toward implementing IEFA, working with school systems on and off the Reservation, and serving as a gubernatorial appointee to the Montana Board of Public Education for ten years (<https://montanatribes.org/joyce-silverthorne/>)

Language revitalization programs on Reservations are tightly connected to tribal Cultural Committees and tribal colleges as primary nests for language revitalization and its popularization. According to Joyce Silverthorn, state universities do not express much interest or initiative in supporting the efforts for Indigenous language revitalization, so these efforts are organized and implemented by Salish Kootenai College and Cultural Committee on the Flathead Reservation.

One particular instance of this is the first attempt by the Salish community to initiate a language program. The University of Montana supported the decision of the Salish, but according to the first grant proposal, control over the finances would be concentrated at the University of Montana instead of the Flathead Reservation, namely Salish Kootenai College and local Cultural Committees. The physical enforcement of matrix language (and subsequently matrix culture, needs, and wants) transformed into the subtle but potent threat to traditional ways of living among the Salish.

Shaul (2014) describes a Native American official language model based on the Western approach to language teaching and language usage. He describes the Western approach as relying heavily on written speech, which is foreign and unnatural to a lot of Native American language communities. He suggests that in order to create a viable and adequate Native American language program, the community should “favor orality over literacy.” He then explains that contexts of language use need to be tailored to each language community to ensure transmitting appropriate contexts of language use instead of “imposing the linguistic ideology of the dominant, English-speaking culture.” (Shaul 2014: 6)

In the same book, Shaul mentions that the classic Western language preservation approach (reliance on different media, such as publishing books, creating television programs, trying to create a heritage language space on the Internet) might not be feasible.

This proposed preference for orality was supported by the Salish community: the utmost importance of the Salish language for them is largely explained by the fact that their heritage language is a communication and bonding tool. Elders share their wisdom and transmit their heritage through stories, and as was stated previously, transmission through English books and English translations of culturally important and sensitive information loses contexts and meanings in any translation.

The Salish believe that their oral tradition not only preserves sacred information for newer generations, but it also supports the Salish way of being: tight connection with

their community and their Elders is vital to them, and heritage language loss steals from this unique experience, as well as makes their culture less exclusive and therefore more vulnerable to external influences like media and Western approach to education.

As the name suggests, revitalization is seen as a notion of breathing life back into something that was presumed nearly dead. In the context of language, it means that the efforts would be aimed at reintroducing language, a complex and multi-level system of human interactions, back into the every day, the mundane. Opposed to the processes of preservation that aims to preserve whatever is seen as remains of the language in its existing (or previous) form, capturing its state and making it permanent – with documenting, which means introducing writing systems that would contain the language and its contents, including context and meaning.

Revitalizing is conceptually different but almost always relies heavily on the materials of the process of language preservation, and it is natural to come to an assumption of a form of hierarchy between the two: historically, minority languages were first preserved by professional linguists whose job was to capture the language in its current state, which would almost always mean documenting it, which means putting it into written form. This means creating grammars, orthographies, and vocabularies that reflect the current state of the language that would, ideally, aid students who wish to master it. It is usually later that the drawbacks of this approach arise: lack of context and detachment from real life, potential sacralization of the language prevents new students who would otherwise be enthusiastic about learning their heritage language from entry.

Salish language educators' community prefers to call the process of bringing their Indigenous language back *language vitalization*. Michael Munson explained that the reason for this choice of a term is the fact that their language “is not gone, it’s still alive, we just need to bring it to life more, we need to reawaken it.” (Munson, personal communication, 19.03.2021)

Sacralization, as was stated before, is a very frequent outcome of any language preservation efforts. It happens when the heritage language has only survived in old folk songs, ceremonial chants, stories, spells, etc. This means that the heritage language lacks immediate access to its own relevant contemporary lexicon or does not have it at all, possibly lacks necessary structures and words to describe the current, and with that secures its place as the sacred language. Oftentimes sacralization happens when the community consciously or unconsciously decides to restrict language use in efforts to

at the very least preserve it in its current state, and being cautious about losing what remains to possible interference from the matrix language. Otherwise, sacralization occurs as the result of the dogmatic approach to language teaching. This approach used to be prevalent in Native American communities, and some educators believe that this can be explained by the boarding school experiences of the older generation. It was mentioned that the Elders of the time did not have other frames of reference, because they acquired education at boarding schools, usually run by some denomination of the Christian church (Catholic or Protestant), and therefore applying same techniques and strategies to teaching their Indigenous language. Educators I was able to talk to mentioned that this is also a remnant of Anglo-Saxon hegemony in formal education that they have to take into account while developing newer strategies and approaches.

Sacred language is the language that is only used in sacred events, important for the spiritual life of the community, such as ceremonies, rituals, and festivals – and otherwise sacred events that are registered as such by the language community (hunting, crafting of certain items, going to sleep or waking up, etc.). One of the main outcomes of sacralization is that oftentimes it keeps the language preserved rather than revitalized. Some Native Americans seem to prefer it this way and develop a language strategy that would enforce this language exclusivity (Kootenai on the Flathead Reservation, as far as I was able to understand) while others see it as a “slow death” that should be avoided. For example, one of the Salish Elders once said during the meeting about the Salish language preservation and revitalization: “I’m not a jar of tomatoes, I don’t want to be preserved. I want to be living.” (Joyce Silverthorne, personal communication) This quote is very important for understanding likeminded Salish language educators: instead of utilizing dogmatic (oftentimes described as “white”, “Western”, “European” etc.) approaches to language teaching they seek guidance from the Elders’ childhood experiences. To achieve that goal, language educators negotiate with the Elders who have more conservative views on their heritage language and try to find the best way of honoring the language in its sacred form while ensuring that their heritage language enters the mundane context once again.

On the Flathead Reservation, the authority of the Elders is very high: their words are respected and heard by the community on most issues, from education to environmental policies. This attention to the Elders is a very important concept in Indigenous methodologies, so modern tribal scholars refer to their opinion to maintain



the principle of doing everything in a good way. Intergenerational communication allows for developing a language ideology that would be acceptable for all generations living on the Reservation, and the outcomes seem to be balanced, well-researched and thoroughly discussed.

The revitalization of the heritage language usually incorporates sacred contexts, but it also features a contemporary, mundane lexicon that serves the community on a daily basis. This is why contemporary efforts in language revival are usually based on a mixed approach: language preservation stage provides the Indigenous community with a basic structure that later can be tailored to fit the needs of this particular language community, facilitation language revitalization efforts like language nests, immersion schools, language educators programs, etc.

It does not mean, however, that language revitalization must be based exclusively on the language preservation approach as the foundation in order to be successful. It means that contemporary language revival movements usually choose the mixture of the two in order to achieve tangible goals.

In the Salish case, both processes are taken into consideration, and means for language revitalization inevitably need interference from the language maintenance approach to compete with the matrix language. For example, language revitalization usually includes some form of language nests, where students interact exclusively in the heritage language without any additions from the matrix one. These nests serve two purposes: create an atmosphere of exclusivity (matrix language is deliberately excluded from classwork and communication between students during studies) and gently inspire informal communication in heritage language without any additions from the matrix one.

For example, stories shared by the Salish nowadays through any kinds of media (books, webpages, videos, etc.) are primarily created in English since the absolute majority of the Salish speaks English as their first language. Describing Indigenous culture, sharing culturally important stories in matrix language means adapting them to the English language, inevitably losing several layers of context and additional, indescribable in English meanings. Interrupting the matrix language hegemony requires a lot of preparatory work, because without mastering Salish on some level, the community would be left without any device of understanding their sacred stories, as Salish, being an autochthonous language, does not have any interlap with English.

Contemporary Salish educators employ mostly purist approach to language teaching: according to Joyce Silverthorne, the Salish language educators would create words that do not currently exist in the Salish lexicon instead of borrowing words from the matrix language. For example, the Salish has created a special word for “pink” instead of adapting it to the Salish grammar. If an outsider would look at the text written in Salish, they would not see a single word that would remind him of an English word, and this is because even if the borrowing into the Salish occurs, it is usually fully translated into Salish and has no English roots to it, besides its initial meaning.

The process of developing new ways of teaching Salish continues to this day: in the 1990’s, language educators would record long programs for the local television, where they would carefully and thoroughly explain the basics of Salish language, there were attempts to create non-educational programs in Salish. Nowadays, it would appear that the newer generation of language educators chooses to use constant personal communication and social media to be relevant and able to maintain motivation of the students, as well as developing new curricula according to the state, federal, and their own, Indigenous requirements.

## **CHAPTER 4. Salish language programs on the Flathead Reservation**

On the Flathead Reservation, there are several institutions involved in Salish language revitalization, and they, while having started independently, came to become tightly connected to each other to ensure that these efforts will be successful. In this chapter, I attempt to describe the structure of Salish language preservation efforts, and its history. While the majority of the information was collected in 2019-2020, I made an attempt to include the latest developments of these efforts, with understanding that the situation could have evolved by the time of publication.

One of the Salish Elders<sup>2</sup>, Antoine (Atwen) Incashola Sr., said that language revitalization efforts on the Flathead Reservation started as early as April 1975, when Séliš-Qłispe Culture Committee was founded “in response to the urgent concern of many traditional elders that we need to take strong action to ensure that our culture would be carried on by younger generations, and by the generations yet to come. Since that time, we have worked hard in many areas to ensure that both our language and way of life will always survive and flourish.” (Séliš-Qłispe Culture Committee, n.d.)

His parents were of the generation of Salish speakers, but the context of language was such that the usage of Salish language was severely discouraged, and he remembers how Salish language was something to be ashamed of. He witnessed how English started to replace Salish in all domains, and Séliš-Qłispe Culture Committee was created partially to reverse this language shift.

He says that Salish language is a gift that should be respected and used the proper way, because the Salish value system and strength come from the language.

According to the Endangered Language Project, “Spokane-Kalispel is spoken in 3 major dialects: (1) Spokane dialect (It has only 2 fluent first-language speakers, a married couple in their 70s; (2) Flathead dialect (also known as Montana Salish) (about 60 fluent first-language speakers of Flathead, one in his 40s, another about 55, all others 65 or older). A sub-dialect is said to characterize Flathead speakers of Pend d’Oreille descent. (3) Kalispel dialect. It needs to be mentioned that the Bitterroot

---

<sup>2</sup> The information presented below is collected from my interviews with Dr. Michael Munson, Rene Dubay, Atwen (Tony) Incashola Sr., Melanie (Milani) Sandoval, Steve (Stipi) Arca, Roy Bigcrane, Eva Oruste, and the recording of the seminar held by the Center for Bilingual and Multicultural Education “Salish Language Revitalization Efforts on the Flathead Reservation, June 23, 2020”

Salish community estimates the number of speakers on the Flathead Reservation as 17 people, and I choose to use their numbers instead, since they have, in my opinion, a better understanding of the situation on their land. (Endangered Language Project, n.d.)



Figure 1. Artwork posted on Nkwusm school's Facebook page. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Nkwusm-Salish-Language-School-176111009079693/>. Accessed 01.08.2021.

One of the first things that the new Séliš-Qlišpe Culture Committee successfully attempted to do was recording of Salish Elders' stories. According to Dr. Michael Munson, an educator at Native Language Teacher Education (NLTE), Salish Language Educator Development (SLED), Culture and Language Studies (CALs), Native American Studies and Division of Education at Salish Kootenai College, they have over 300 hours of recorded speech that preserved Salish language as it was spoken by the generation who was still fluent in it. These recordings helped preserve sacred stories, place names that are being reclaimed by the Flathead Reservation: all road signs on the Flathead Reservation have English, Salish, and Kootenai translations on them.

Starting in 1990s, a group of activists joined the Séliš-Qlišpe Culture Committee in its efforts to create a program of language revitalization. One of the main problems this

group noticed was that this language was not transmitted to children, which puts it in a vulnerable position. As was mentioned before, in order to acquire experience, this group contacted the Hawaiians and Maori, whose language programs were very successful in revitalizing their Indigenous languages. These communities “talked them through the process”, shared their materials and educated their instructors on how they organized and lead their language schools.

Salish language educators see an unexpected surge in interest in the Salish language among the younger generation, and Joyce Silverthorne describes it thus: “Each year I am incredibly impressed at how much more language is being used. I believe that the students themselves are creating “the need to know”. And so they speak to each other, they talk about things, and they use the language in ways I don’t know if any of us back in 1990 could’ve envisioned.” (Personal communication, 26.03.2021). She also mentions that this surge of interest created unprecedented opportunities for intergenerational transmission of knowledge. I would argue that this result is one of the most important, because if the community chooses to use their Indigenous language for talking with its Elders inspires unique ways of exchanging knowledge and heritage without the matrix language setting the parameters of the conversation, then it creates and perpetuates “the need to know” that Joyce Silverthorne mentioned in her interview with me.

One of the aspects of almost unanimously supported Salish language ideology is identity- and community building. They rely on scientific data showing that Native American communities that were able to reestablish their identities were stronger and healthier. “If people know who they are, they are better people”. (Munson, personal communication 19.03.2021) They take into account data showing that stronger groups of people with similar understanding of their identities were able to produce more successful people who contribute to the further success of their own community. In this particular instance, the Salish language is considered to be an important tool for nation-building.

SLED program began at a request from Nk<sup>w</sup>usm language school. Their first grant was developed as an ANA (Administration for Native Americans) grant, where one of the objectives would be to provide support for future Indigenous language educators.

In 2016, they approached Salish Kootenai College with this proposal. It was decided that it would be the best for these future educators to receive some form of certification

or, if possible, an associate degree. This program was able to receive the ANA grant in 2018 through Salish Kootenai College. At the same time, Nk'wusm language school's apprenticeship program for adult was moved to Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee, where Chaney Bell, the Salish language coordinator, was able to receive funding from the tribe to hire ten apprentices per year. Thus, ten apprentices from Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee would receive an associate degree from Salish Kootenai College.

One of the challenges of this approach to funding their students is that this program takes more than one year, so instead of having ten new students every year, they would only accept four, since six students from the previous cohort were not yet able to graduate from the program.

According to Michael Munson, SLED program utilizes the natural approach to Indigenous language teaching. This means that they try to mimic the way the kids are taught their first language, by constant repetition and constant immersion into the language. Their first book mostly consists of essential beginner-level vocabulary that allows for phrase building (500-1000 words), and the second book teaches students operate on a story level. The third one moves onto the story level, where phrases turn into cohesive narrative structures. The books are designed to follow the way a child would learn the language: first separate words, then short phrases, then sentences, then stories.

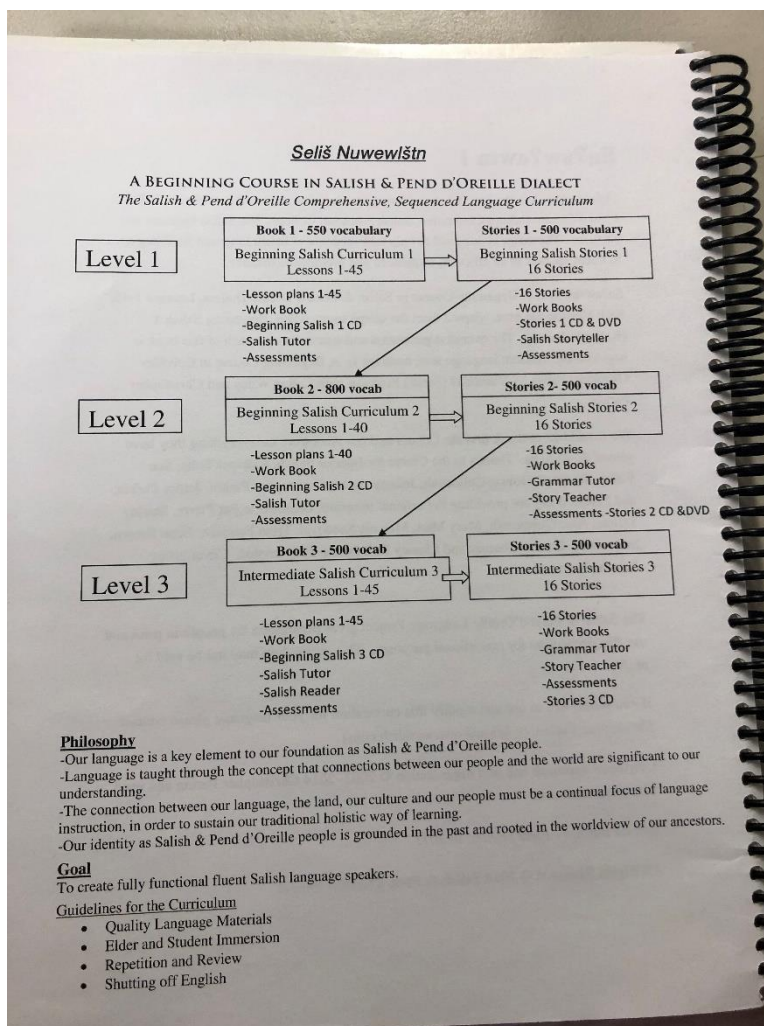


Figure 2. Diachenko, Elizaveta. The structure of the language component of SLED program from the textbooks provided by Melanie Sandoval. 2019.

However, the program can not fully develop its language immersion component, because there is only one Elder (Stephen SmallSalmon) who is actively involved in the program and is able to “be in the language” for extended periods of time.

#### 4.1 Séliš-Q̓lispe Culture Committee

This is how SQCC describes its origins and goals: “The Salish - Pend d' Oreille Culture Committee was first created in 1974-75 in response to the urgent concern of many traditional elders that we need to take strong action to ensure that ou[r] culture would be carried on by younger generations, and by the generations yet to come. Since that time, we have worked hard in many areas to ensure that both our language and way of life will always survive and flourish.” (Séliš-Q̓lispe Culture Committee, n.d.)

Their role, as I was able to understand, is to support the efforts directed at revitalizing the Salish and the Pend d'Oreille culture and language, and in order to achieve that they are in constant communication with the tribal Elders to make sure that the community's efforts are moving "in a good way" and the Elders are not only included in this conversation but have enough power and influence to influence and inspire it. It would appear that the main cause for SQCC is ensuring continuous intergenerational cultural communication and transmission. This is an influential advisory body that consults tribal and non-tribal local and federal governments. Among other things, SQCC is responsible for organizing traditional cultural events, Salish language classes, organizing and maintaining History & Culture Archives, tribal history and ethnography projects, sacred ceremonies, etc. One of the most important responsibilities of maintaining and administering the Longhouse (Usšnełx<sup>w</sup>), the important center of tribal life. Wakes and funerals, traditional tribal activities, Salish-Pend d'Oreille Elders Cultural Advisory Council meetings, Salish language and culture camps etc.

SQCC provides a much needed cultural support for the community and all the other institutions involved in the Salish language revitalization efforts are tightly connected to this body.

It is important to mention that SQCC has the power to approve or disapprove any academic research conducted on the Flathead Reservation. Any scholar that needs to talk to the members of the community and use acquired knowledge for their research must present their proposal to the SQCC Board.



## 4.2 Salish Kootenai College

Salish Kootenai College was established in 1977 as a branch campus of the Flathead Valley Community College, and it disassociated from FVCC in 1981 to become an independent tribal institution. The history of its creation in itself is an example of tribal cooperation: specialists involved in establishing this college were asking the local tribal population about their needs and wishes to develop programs that would best serve them and provide them with the most relevant degrees. To this day SKC has programs tailored specifically to people who want to continue serving the Reservation's needs, and it assumes that its students will stay to help it succeed.



*Figure 3. Diachenko, Elizaveta. Salish Kootenai College. 2020.*

Initial two grants were design to provide degree-level education in Indigenous languages, both Salish and Kootenai. There were students from other tribes, like Blackfeet or Crow, Northern Cheyenne, there were other languages. One quarter there

were six different Indigenous languages taught at SKC (1994-1996). All students were required to pass at least two quarters of Indigenous languages. For Salish and Kootenai it was their own languages, and members of other tribes could choose to learn and research their own languages on the basis of SKC. Usually, students from other tribes who express interest in doing that would bring their relative who would be fluent in their language with them. They were brought to participate in conversations about second language learning, language acquisition, decoding etc.

One of the main problems of this program was the lack of job opportunities after graduation. Back in the 1990's, there were almost no programs at local schools that would require specialists in Indigenous language education.

During that time, Montana tribes worked closely with the State of Montana to develop an Indigenous language certification, so all twelve tribes agreed to bring a person they would see as the most knowledgeable teacher of their Indigenous language. This person would have the right to certify new Indigenous language teachers on a state level.

The state of Montana has developed a special license for public educators,

Class 7 (Native American Language and Culture Educator), but there used to be no college-level programs for it, because the universities and colleges could not at the time provide their students with relevant programs.

This Class 7 certification varies from tribe to tribe. In terms of Indigenous language, Class 7 license is tailored in accordance with the state of Indigenous language fluency of the tribe: the Crow include fluency in their language in their Class 7 certification because they have enough fluent speakers to have their annual membership meeting held entirely in Crow language, so in order to be able to participate in ceremonies and have influence on tribal policies a person needs to have a good command of the Crow language.

In 2021, charged by Atwen Incashola, the Salish Elder, Salish Kootenai College has developed a wide variety of programs that are focused on the revitalization of Salish language through language teaching and creating new professionals in Salish Language Education, as well as providing opportunities to receive Intensive Salish Language Certificate of Completion. Another important step was to develop a program for Culture and Language Studies, which provides their students with deeper focus on Salish cultural heritage.



Figure 4. Diachenko, Elizaveta. Screenshot from the webinar "Salish Language Revitalization Efforts on the Flathead Reservation, June 23, 2020". Accessed 10.07.2021

### 4.3 Nkwusm Salish language school

Nkwusm was founded in 2002 to create a language immersion school for Salish children. Their mission is to create spaces of immersive, natural, and holistic learning which aims to “recreate a process whereby the Salish Language is passed from parents to children, elder to youth” (Nkwusm Salish Language School, n.d.). Their education program involves people of all ages, and currently welcomes kids as old as three and five years old. Now there are 40 students at their school. They also invite adults to study language, as according to Melanie (Milani) Sandoval, they needed adults so those could teach and transmit the language. Adults who are able to teach the language would become a bridge between the Elders, who know the language but do not have degrees in education, and the educators, who have relevant degrees but do not speak Salish language. The group led by the Sélis-Qlispé Culture Committee adopted the language curriculum model already developed by their sister tribe of the Interior Salish and their Salish School of Spokane and tailored to the needs and language realities of the Salish on the Flathead Reservation.

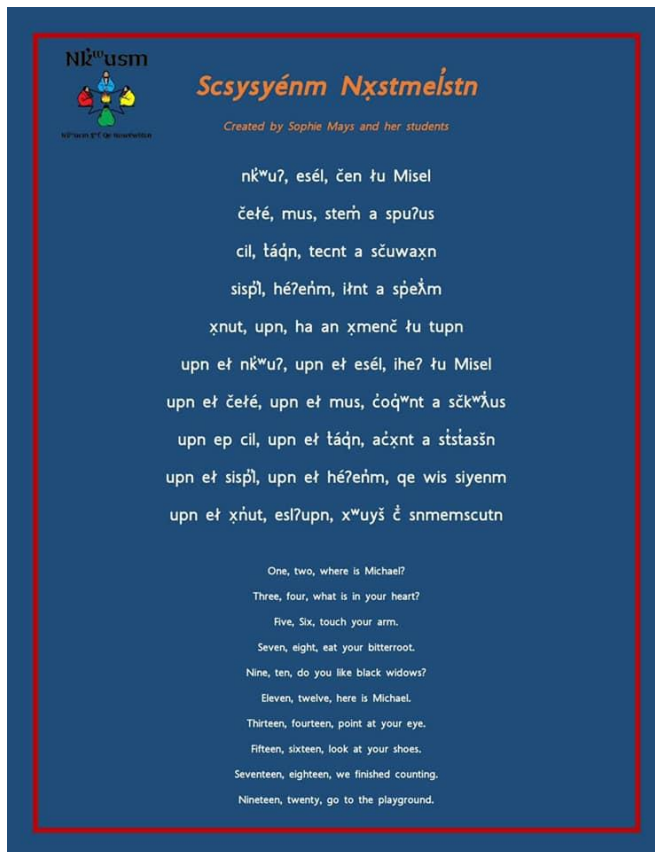


Figure 5. Counting exercises posted on the school's Facebook page. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Nkwusm-Salish-Language-School-176111009079693/>. Accessed 01.08.2021.

One of the challenges of language nests provided by Nkwusm language school was that parents were hesitant to send their children to the school where the academics could potentially be not as rigorous as in public schools, or because they were not confident that children would be able to understand the program taught in an unfamiliar language.

Another challenge was developing the best approach to the language itself, and every Elder and every educator oftentimes has their own vision of how the language should function in the classroom. Some Elders would demand that the student speaks the language “the right way, or doesn’t speak at all” (Joyce Silverthorne, p.c. 28.03.2021). Some would encourage the language use in general, and fix occasional mistakes rather than setting defined boundaries to the classroom language use in order to rapidly introduce the language into the mundane. Overall overtime the dogmatic approach was mostly replaced by the strategy that would encourage everyday use.

At the beginning, according to Joyce Silverthorne, there was a problem regarding who would be teaching at this school. Elders who were fluent in the language oftentimes had no experience teaching in the classroom setting, and many would refuse

to start going through necessary training: some did not feel that they see themselves as school teachers, some were involved in tribal affairs and did not have enough time etc.

Later, the younger generation that had or acquired some knowledge of the Salish language through adult apprenticeship program at Nk<sup>w</sup>usm were invited to go through teacher training and certification in order to be effective in the classroom. The first cohort is still teaching at SLED program, bachelors' degree program at SKC and Nk<sup>w</sup>usm. There are currently 38 students in Pre-school through 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes at the Nk<sup>w</sup>usm school.

In 2020, Nk<sup>w</sup>usm Salish Language School was awarded a grant for their immersion program.

## **Conclusion**

Present inquiry's aim was to describe the processes of the language revitalization efforts of the Bitterroot Salish community on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana and to discuss the possible reasons for the chosen or preferred language ideology. In the process of these inquiries, I was able to find several groups that participate in the debate surrounding the development of a unifying language ideology.

One group, usually represented by the younger generation sees the language as the device of reclaiming their stolen identity. They seem to be eager to use their Indigenous language on social media, share their traditional songs and this way establish their presence. They appear to be seeing the language as the device of refining their identity and finding their place on every level: national, cultural, ethnic etc. Refining identity in this discourse means to find their place in these coordinates, from being an American citizen to being a Native American, to belonging to a particular tribe. Younger generation seems to be eager to know as much as possible about their culture and language because it would, in this discourse, give them the tools for finding themselves, placing themselves and establishing themselves as Salish. In this sense, Salish language helps their nation-building processes.

This process has the potential of revitalizing the Salish language, but it also opens its lexicon to inevitable change: while the majority of people I talked to refused to entertain the idea of borrowing English words into Salish, they would still need to invent new words that would be able to sustain contemporary everyday communication. This approach also will invite indirect borrowing from English, since the concepts that the Salish language does not have in its lexicon would have to enter it through the first language of contemporary Salish people, and this language is English. Indirect borrowing, as creative as it can be, still borrows entire concepts and semantic clusters from the foreign language, and some people in the Salish community are deeply concerned that it might harm the language and still perpetuate matrix language cultural hegemony, now in their own Indigenous language.

Another group, mostly consisting of some of the Elders and more conservative-minded people, surviving the erasure of their culture and language, seem to see Salish language as the most reliable intangible heritage transmitter, and they are sensitive to the changes that are being brought into it in the process of reintroducing Salish language into mundane contexts. They are extremely cautious when using the language, since they consider it to be one of the forms of sacred knowledge that should

be approached with utmost respect. They are presented with a dilemma: while desperately trying to revive the language, they consider it fragile and sacred, and therefore they insist that the language stays as it was preserved. This approach may lead to the sacralization of Salish language, and it would potentially continue to preserve it, but it would also prevent it from reentering the everyday communication, since it would limit the contexts in which it could be used without changing. It was mentioned in several interviews that this view on the language comes from the generational trauma of boarding schools and their consequences and experience with matrix language and its cultural influence on the Native population.

It needs to be mentioned, however, that while these two language ideologies could potentially be described as mostly generational, it does not mean the divide is sharp and clear: the Salish community seems to be very tight-knit, and therefore constant intergenerational communication blurs the age line for any of these two groups.

Salish language educators, in this particular instance, seem to be working as mediators, whose job is to balance these two language ideologies into a cohesive structure that would honor the opinions of both groups while ensuring constant progress in reintroducing Indigenous language to the community in the best way. One of the educators has told me during one of the interviews that she constantly asks herself if she is doing what she is doing the good way, is she serving the community, is she listening carefully enough, and the goal of her efforts is to make sure that her work goes in accordance with the principles of Indigenous methodologies and, more specifically, to the Salish way of doing things.

It would appear that contemporary language revitalization, or revival, in the Salish case, is very tightly connected to the nation-building processes to inspire cultural cohesion of the group, and to achieve that goal they are willing to search for the perfect balance between the state and federal requirements and the needs and the established ways of their community. This strategy aims to aid the development of the educational system that would empower the younger generation to be capable of utilizing matrix and Indigenous principles and competences in order to build a strong community that is able to succeed independently while being competent while working closely with the state and federal government to ensure prosperity of their Reservation.

## Resümees

### Seliši keele säilitamise ja taaselustamise metodoloogia Flatheadi reservaadis

Magistritöö käsitleb põliskeelte säilitamise ja taaselustamise kaasaegseid meetodeid, mille on välja töötanud selišid Flatheadi reservaadis Montanas, USA-s.

Väitekiri põhineb valdavalt etnograafilisest välitöödel kogutud ja loodud materjalidel. Organiseerisin kaks reisi: ettevalmistavatele välitöödele 2019. aastal järgnes pikem reis 2020. aastal, mille käigus osalesin ka teemakohastes loengutes. COVID-19 pandeemia tõttu pidin välitöid pikendama, tänu millele olin Seliši keeleharidustöötajate kogukonnaga ühenduses peaaegu viis kuud. Kuna suurem osa õppetööst toimus veebis, sain selles osaleda nii palju, kui oli lubatud. Viisin läbi mitmeid intervjuusid ning uurisin ka minule kättesaadavaid Seliši keeleharidusprogrammide loojate sõnavõtte, loenguid ja ettekandeid.

Mõistmaks keelehoiu kaasaegset metoodikat Flatheadi reservaadis, on oluline asetada need jõupingutused avaramasse konteksti. Selleks esitan magistritöös ülevaate Ameerika Ühendriikide põliskeelte ajaloost ja tutvustan kõige olulisemaid teoreetilisi kontseptsioone, mis aitavad kujundada teoreetilist raamistikku, mille abil arutan keeleolukorda Flatheadi reservaadis.

Flatheadi reservaadis on Seliši keele taaselustamisega seotud mitu institutsiooni, millest kõige olulisemad on:

1. Sé'lis' - Ql'ispe kultuurikomisjon;
2. Seliš Kootenai kolledž;
3. Nkwusm Salishi keeltekool.

Olles küll iseseisvalt alustanud, on need üksteisega tihedalt seotud, mis aitab ühiste eesmärkide elluviimisele kaasa. Koos suutsid nad välja töötada võimalikult ühtse strateegia, mida rakendatakse mitmel tasandil alates koolieelsest haridusest kuni ülikoolideni. Kuigi välitööd toimusid peamiselt 2019. ja 2020. aastal, püüdsin kaasata ka nende jõupingutuste viimased arengud ning olukord on pidevas muutumises.

Käesolev magistritöö kirjeldab ka põlisrahva mõtteleo metodoloogia mõistet nagu seda kasutab Selište kogukond, et töötada välja uusi viise oma keele ja kultuuri õpetamiseks noorematele põlvkondadele, otsides samas kooskõla traditsioonidega.

Uurimistöö sisaldab ka Flatheadi reservaadis kaasaegse keeleideoloogia analüüsi. Selle järgi võib suhtumises kaasaegsesse Seliši keelde välja tuua vähemalt kolm erinevat lähenemist:



1. Konservatiivsem, puristlikum suhtumine Seliši keelde, mis aitab kaasa keele sakraliseerimisele ja seab eesmärgiks keelepuhtuse säilitamise.

2. Leebem suhtumine, mis tervitab põliskeelet taaskehtestamist ilmalikes kontekstides. Olles sakraliseerimise vastu, toetab see Seliši keele kasutamist igapäevases elus, ega keelab samas slängi loomise.

3. Keeleideoloogiate arendamine keeleõpetajate poolt lähtuvalt kogukonna kui terviku hüvangust. Praegu see lähenemine domineerib Selište põliskeelet taastamise teemalistes debattides, kuna võimaldab ühendada erinevaid arvamusi ja leida rahuldavaid lahendusi põliskeelet poliitika probleemidele Flathead reservaadis.

## References

### Fieldwork and Interviews Cited

Dr. Michael Munson. Personal Interviews. Winter 2019 – Summer 2021.

Informant A. Personal Interview. Winter 2019.

Informant B. Personal Interview. Winter 2019.

Joyce Silverthorne. Personal Interview. 26 March, 2021.

Rene Dubay. Personal Interviews. Winter 2019 – Summer 2021.

### Works Cited

“About. Séliš-Qłispe Culture Committee.” Accessed July 13, 2021.  
<http://www.salishaudio.org/about/>.

“An Ecological Approach to Indigenous Language Renewal.” Accessed March 17, 2021. [https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL\\_25.html](https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL_25.html).

“Arlee Powwow.” Accessed June 17, 2020. <http://www.arleepowwow.com/>.

“Comparing Cree, Hualapai, Maori, and Hawaiian Language Programs.” Accessed March 17, 2021. [https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL\\_21.html](https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL_21.html).

“Cultural History-Brief History of the People.” Accessed August 15, 2021.  
[http://www.flatheadwatershed.org/cultural\\_history/pend\\_salish.shtml](http://www.flatheadwatershed.org/cultural_history/pend_salish.shtml).

“Current ANA Grantees.” Accessed June 15, 2021.  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ana/grant-funding/current-ana-grantees>.

“Flathead Indian Reservation.” Accessed April 30, 2021.  
<https://www.montana.edu/extensionecon/reservationdata/flatheadreservation.pdf>

“Purism vs. Compromise in Language Revitalization and Language Revival.”  
*Language in Society* 23, no. 4 (1994): 479–94.

“Salish Language.” Accessed June 17, 2020.  
<https://sites.google.com/site/salishlanguage/>.

“Selis Qlispe Culture Committee.” Accessed June 17, 2020.  
<http://www.csktsalish.org/index.php/about/selis-qlispe-culture-committee>.

“Shifting Sands: Language and Identity in North American Indigenous Communities,” n.d.

“Teaching Indigenous Languages: Contents.” Accessed March 17, 2021.  
[https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL\\_Contents.html](https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL_Contents.html).

Census Reporter. "Census Profile: Flathead Reservation CCD, Lake County, MT." Accessed April 30, 2021. <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US3004791123-flathead-reservation-ccd-lake-county-mt/>.

Coronel-Molina, Serafín M., and T. L. McCarty, eds. *Indigenous Language Revitalization in the Americas*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Dorian, Nancy C. "Purism vs. Compromise in Language Revitalization and Language Revival," 1994. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500018169>.

Endangered Languages. "Kalispel-Spokane-Pend d'Oreille-Salish" Accessed July 17, 2021. <http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/4148>.

First Peoples Cultural Council. "Language Nest Program." Accessed May 5, 2021. <https://fpcc.ca/program/language-nest/>.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Repr. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2012.

Jones, Mari C., and Sarah Ogilvie, eds. *Keeping Languages Alive: Documentation, Pedagogy and Revitalization*. Cambridge : New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Kovach, Margaret. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 2009.

Kroskrity, Paul V., and Margaret C. Field, eds. *Native American Language Ideologies: Beliefs, Practices, and Struggles in Indian Country*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009.

Lambert, Lorelei A. *Research for Indigenous Survival: Indigenous Research Methodologies in the Behavioral Sciences*. Pablo, Montana: Salish Kootenai College Press, distributed by University of Nebraska Press, 2014.

Leanne Hinton, Leena Huss, and Gerald Roche, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*. The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization. Routledge, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315561271>.

McCarty, Teresa L., and Sheilah E. Nicholas. "Reclaiming Indigenous Languages: A Reconsideration of the Roles and Responsibilities of Schools." *Review of Research in Education* 38 (2014): 106–36.

Ngai, Phyllis. *Crossing Mountains: Native American Language Education in Public Schools*. *Contemporary Native American Communities*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012.

Nkwusm Salish Language Institute. “Nkwusm Salish Language Institute.” Accessed June 17, 2020. <https://www.nkwusm.com>.

Nkwusm- Salish Language School. “Nkwusm- Salish Language School.” Accessed May 15, 2021. <https://www.nkwusm.com>.

Odé, C. Learning Your Endangered Native Language in a Small Multilingual Community: The Case of Tundra Yukagir in Andriushkino. Fürstenberg/HavelKulturstiftung Sibirien, 2013. <https://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=d016849d-671d-493a-a618-3dc944d52e16>.

Salish Kootenai College. “Culture and Language Studies Department.” Accessed August 15, 2021. <https://www.skcc.edu/cals/>.

Salish Kootenai College. “SLED.” Accessed August 15, 2021. <https://www.skcc.edu/sled/>.

Salish Language Revitalization Efforts on the Flathead Reservation, June 23, 2020. Accessed August 15, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rH8ywRGX6nU>.

Whittaker, Gordon. “Shifting Sands: Language and Identity in North American Indigenous Communities.” *Lengua, Nación e Identidad. La Regulación Del Plurilingüismo En España y América Latina*, 2008, 325–39.

Windchief, Sweeney, and Timothy San Pedro, eds. *Applying Indigenous Research Methods: Storying with Peoples and Communities. Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2019.

Non-exclusive license to reproduce thesis and make thesis public

1. I, Elizaveta Diachenko, herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive license) to reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright, *The Methodology of Preservation and Revitalization of Salish Language on the Flathead Reservation*, supervised by Associate Professor of Ethnology Laur Vallikivi, PhD.

2. I grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the work specified in p. 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 3.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work until the expiry of the term of copyright.

3. I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in p. 1 and 2.

4. I certify that granting the non-exclusive license does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

Elizaveta Diachenko

07/08/2021