

YOU CAN'T KILL COYOTE
STORIES OF LANGUAGE HEALING FROM
CHIEF ATAHM SCHOOL
SECWEPENC LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAM

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the
Faculty of Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Spring 2005

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the remarkable journey to save a dying language by a small group of people on the Adams Lake Reserve in Chase, British Columbia. It is a qualitative study of the experiences of the founding members of the Chief Atahm Secwepemc Immersion School. The study focuses on community language rebuilding, indigenous language revitalization initiatives, and the personal impact of language learning. In addition, I present an overview of the history surrounding the loss of aboriginal languages in Canada, in particular the loss of the Secwepemc language.

An important part of this thesis is the exploration of the relationship between language and identity. My analysis of the interview data shows the existence of a deep, meaningful personal journey by the staff and school community that has helped to support the school's development. With this thesis I hope to inspire others to celebrate their unique heritages.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the strength of our ancestors and the beauty of the Secwepemc culture. I pray that all peoples will celebrate the gift of their histories and actively maintain their heritage languages.

I wish to thank the language teachers of Chief Atahm School for ensuring that their knowledge of the Secwepemc language and culture is passed on to the younger generations. I thank all aboriginal elders who continue to share their wisdom with their families and communities.

I acknowledge the vision of the staff, parents, and students of Chief Atahm School. We share the spirit of hope for our culture. Together we are climbing the mountain and harvesting the food to heal our souls.

Kukstsemc my dear family for your endless patience and support.
Kukstsemc Adams Lake Band for believing in the vision.

Special thanks to Dr. Kelleen Toohey and Dr. Marianne Ignace for their comments and academic support throughout the writing of this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

The history of the native peoples of British Columbia from the time of European contact is a compelling story of heartbreak and loss. The destructive process of colonization has occurred worldwide, leaving the indigenous cultures to pick up the pieces of what is left of their languages and traditions. In the Interior of British Columbia, the history of the indigenous group, the Secwepemc, is marked by tragedy and loss. Before European contact, Secwepemc communities were healthy, vibrant cultures with a strong oral storytelling tradition. With the onset of colonization in the 19th century, and particularly with the arrival of smallpox and other epidemics, the Secwepemc population diminished. The loss of thousands of people in Secwepemc communities, coinciding with the gradual overtaking of their traditional lands by European settlers, left the Secwepemc Nation struggling to survive.

The epidemics of the mid to late 1800s left the Secwepemc culture in a weakened state. This excerpt cited from M.S Wade's book, originally found in an

Overlander's journal (new settlers into the area), describes the effects of smallpox.

Then came another day of hunger and again the sight of an Indian encampment or village raised their hopes. Once more they ran the raft ashore. Not a living soul was to be seen. Cautiously the men approached the houses, and to their horror saw dead bodies lying exposed everywhere. They were the victims of an epidemic of smallpox that swept through British Columbia that year and decimated the native population. (Wade, 1931, p. 42)

Using estimates of Secwepemc population figures from oral sources and Department of Indian Affairs Reports, ethnographer James Teit records that there were significant losses recorded for the years 1850, 1903, and 1906. From the 6 remaining Secwepemc tribal divisions, approximately 60.5% of the Secwepemc population perished. Coinciding with this tragedy were the ongoing attempts of the Canadian government to "civilize" the native population.

The passage of the British North America Act in 1867 asserted colonial control of First Nations in Canada. In 1876, the Indian Act further centralized and legislated aboriginal issues. As part of colonial efforts to assimilate the native population into Anglo-Canadian society, the American model of residential schools was considered by Anglo-Canadian administrators to replace the industrial school system already in place (see definitions of "schools" in Terms, p.

6). In 1879, the Davin Report, an inquiry into schooling for aboriginal children, recommended that the residential school model be implemented. It also suggested that the schools be operated by the various Christian denominations with established ties to aboriginal groups.

Through all variations of boarding school, industrial schools, and day schools it was apparent to the government that the results were less than satisfactory (Titley, p.81). Graduates of the schools were not effectively and efficiently fitting into Anglo-Canadian society. It was thought that perhaps the proximity of the schools to the native communities was negatively affecting results. In 1920, the Indian Act was amended to include compulsory schooling for all children of aboriginal descent from the ages of seven to fifteen. In 1930, another section was added to the Indian Act that imposed fines and jail terms for parents who did not comply.

This process served to debilitate the Secwepemc language and culture even further. For the next generation of children of the survivors of the residential schools, the language was at the point of extinction. Most of the parents chose to protect their children from the shame and punishment they themselves had received when attempting to use their language at residential

school, by not teaching their children their language. By choice, many were raising their children to know and use English only (Haig-Brown, pp.109-110).

However, just as the trickster figure, Coyote, in the Secwepemc oral storytelling tradition never dies, the language has survived. In 1987, a small group of people from the Shuswap Lakes area began a journey to help save their dying language from extinction. From the fragments of the Secwepemc language and culture came the development of the Chief Atahm Immersion School, a First Nations School near Chase, B.C. This school has shown much leadership, vision, and determination by developing an immersion school program on the Adams Lake Reserve. In 1987 this vision began with the opening of a Secwepemc immersion language nest for children from birth to five years old. This pioneering effort was modeled after the successful Maori initiative called "Te Kohanga Reo" (language nest). Over the years the Secwepemc language initiative has grown to include programs ranging from a full immersion primary program, a bilingual program for Grades 4 to 7, adult non-credit and credited language classes, and teacher training courses for First Nations' communities province-wide and beyond.

This thesis tells the story of Chief Atahm School. Through a series of interviews I intend to give hope and renewal for indigenous communities striving to revive their languages. I will focus on the role that indigenous language revival plays in forging a stronger sense of personal identity as well as identity in connection to a larger community. This research will examine the motivating factors in establishing an aboriginal immersion program and bring to life the sources of inspiration and strength from which the founding members of the program have drawn to help them succeed. I hope that their stories will assist other groups struggling to revive their languages in their communities.

Terms

Here are some key terms used throughout the thesis:

- Bilingual School – an academic program wherein a portion of the school day is conducted in the mainstream language and a portion is conducted in the target language.
- Colonization – a process referring to the settling of a new country already inhabited. Often the colonizers hold the balance of power and control the land and economic base.
- Culture – the customary beliefs, social forms, and behaviours of a racial, religious, or social grouping of people.
- Identity –A person's private concept of self as shaped both by life experience and self-reflection. " Identity is a concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations" (Holland, 1998, p.5).

- Immersion – an education program wherein all course content is taught in the target language, including core content courses of Math, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies.
- Intergenerational Transmission – in reference to the passing down of heritage languages to another generation.
- Language fluency – for the purposes of this paper this refers to a subjective assessment of one's language communicative ability rather than one determined through any formal method of proficiency testing.
- Language nest – an English translation of the Maori language initiative, "Te Kohanga Reo", preschool language immersion programs.
- Language revitalization – the development of programs that result in re-establishing or reviving the use of a minority language.
- Language shift – a term used to define the period of language change from the heritage language to that of another cultures.
- Personal healing – part of a lifelong process of human development generally referring to movement towards self-realization and away from self-destructive behaviours.
- Schools:
 - Day Schools were the first schools for First Nations students. The students attended school only during the day.
 - Industrial Schools were focused on developing agricultural skills. Students lived at the schools for most of the year.
 - Residential Schools placed more emphasis on education and religion. Students lived at the school for ten months of the year.
- Secwepemc – the correct term for the indigenous people of South-central British Columbia. Anglicized form is "Shuswap".
- Secwepemctsin – the language of the Secwepemc people.
- Te Kohanga Reo – a Maori language revival initiative in New Zealand. The English translation is "language nests" or language immersion early childhood programs for children from birth to five years old.

The Researcher

In the Secwepemc cultural tradition it is fitting to introduce your ancestors and their history before yourself. My parents are Joseph and Anne Michel. Their parents are Edward Michel, Sarah Michel, Eliza Soulle and Arthur Stratton, respectively. Both my mother and my father were born at Tkméqs, or as it is known now, "Indian Point", on the eastern shores of Adams Lake. I am the eighth child of nine children in total. It is a testament to the strength and guidance of my parents that eight of their children have gone on to receive university degrees.

In 1987 I received my Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of British Columbia and set out to change the world. Little did I know at the time that my graduating year would also mark the beginning of self-discovery. I began on this amazing journey by becoming involved with learning my native language. To this day, I continue to be active in teaching the Secwepemc language and am thankful for the strange twists that life sometimes takes that can lead you back home. With this thesis, I wish to honour my parents for generously passing on to me, and to others, our precious Secwepemc traditions and language.

I am one of the founders of Chief Atahm School and I have also shared my story. Many people have asked if we have chronicled our school's history for them to garner inspiration and insight. Up until now I haven't taken the time to reflect on our accomplishments or even to rejoice in our exciting journey. When I look back to where I was before I became involved in language immersion and compare it to my life now, I tend to see the change in me in spiritual terms. I equate my involvement to a religious conversion or awakening, so to speak. The learning of my language has fueled my passion for life. I have reconciled myself to many past hurts and have a strong, empowering vision for the future. I am only one person amongst many who have a story to tell.

Research

This research consists of interviews of people associated with the development of the Chief Atahm School program. The focus of my research is to discover the underlying motivators and intrinsic rewards of learning a heritage language. A qualitative research approach was used to gather information through one on one interviews. Each participant was asked a standard set of questions regarding their experiences with learning language. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed with copies stored in a secure location at

Chief Atahm School. Each participant was given their transcribed interviews for review and asked to validate their accuracy. The information collected added up to be a substantial amount of data which I had to organize into themes and ideas. I hope that I have succeeded in my attempts to communicate their words.

Outline of the Thesis Elements

- **Chapter One**

This chapter includes an overall introduction to my research. A historical and personal context to the thesis is presented, as well as a glossary of terms.

- **Chapter Two**

In this chapter I review several examples of literature within the research areas of: Secwepemc history, residential schooling, language loss and revitalization.

- **Chapter Three**

Within this chapter I outline the research methods employed in this study. An outline of the participants in the study and a description of the research questions are also included in this chapter.

- **Chapter Four**

I present my research findings that comprise of excerpts of interviews conducted with participants from the Chief Atahm School community. I provide a summative commentary throughout the chapter to highlight themes and significant phenomenon.

- **Chapter Five**

In Chapter Five I provide an analysis of the research findings and discuss possible future applications and implications of my research.

Thesis Summary

This thesis explores the experiences of the various members of the Chief Atahm School community. Within the interview process I have strived to uncover the motivating factors for each individual's involvement in the program.

By relating their personal stories of learning the Secwepemc language and of sharing their knowledge of the language, I hope to highlight the relationship between language and identity. I hope this research will help inspire other aboriginal communities to trust the wisdom of their ancestors and embark on a journey to rediscover the beauty of their languages and cultures.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss literature that relates to research in the area of language and identity, aboriginal language revival, and healing through language learning. I also review literature regarding the loss of language in the world and the problems associated with this loss. In order to put the Secwepemc (or Shuswap) language initiative into its proper context, I first provide a historical background on the Secwepemc people.

I found it difficult to find resources about the revitalization of the world's indigenous languages and found even less information on language revitalization efforts in Canada. For example, there are few published books on the Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, and their successful language programs. In Canada, there is little information to be found on the Mohawk immersion programs, even though their programs have been in existence for over two decades. I have chosen to focus on literature relating to aboriginal school-based programs as these programs are comparable to the situation at Chief Atahm

School. I hope to uncover evidence of language programs that work and discover what purpose such programs serve within their communities, and ultimately, to the individuals involved in them.

Secwepemc Culture: Coyote History

Throughout this thesis the character of Coyote will be making an appearance. The Coyote figure is the trickster figure within the Secwepemc oral tradition. Although many other trickster figures can be found amongst North American native traditions, Coyote is prominent within the Salishan tribes and the American Southwest. Within these cultures there exists no ultimate Coyote prototype, for his traits are as varied as the cultures he represents. However, one thing that may be a common feature is that Coyote, as the trickster, is endowed with magical powers and is responsible for creating such beautiful things as mountains and waterways, as well as for providing comic relief. In many cultures, including the Secwepemc culture, one magical power that Coyote has is that he never dies. Although many of his adventures lead to his death, he always comes back to life again, oblivious to the dangers that befell him, and continues on his travels.

Coyote stories magnify the human experience in a light-hearted, self-mocking way. As we follow Coyote's path we can gain a sense of our own adventurous spirit and overriding curiosity and realize that sometimes we succeed in creating something good and sometimes we completely screw up. This caricature of ourselves anchors our place in the world. As we follow Coyote's tracks we can feel secure in our own survival. I have used the character of Coyote as my guide and as my source of inspiration. Like Coyote, our language may experience death, but I believe it will always come back to life again.

Pre-contact History (prior to 1793)

The Secwepemc traditional territory spans a vast area now referred to as the South-Central Interior of British Columbia. Traditionally, the Secwepemc were hunters, gatherers, and fishers. An archaeological report of the Chase area notes:

Hunting, fishing, and the collection and processing of roots occupied the spring and early summer months. Fish were harpooned, speared with leisters, gaffed, caught in basketry traps and weirs, hooked by trolling and straight line, and trapped with drag-nets... Roots were collected in upland areas using digging sticks, and usually processed in earth ovens near the collection areas. (Rousseau & Stryd, 1988, p.16)

Summers were spent harvesting plant foods and berries in preparation for the long winter months. In late summer and fall, hunting and fishing became the primary food source. Within the Secwepemc territory, in particular in the mountainous regions, the winters made for harsh living environments. To reduce the competition for resources, small bands of people, usually extended families, would travel together to harvest food. Larger groups would settle in winter in earth-covered, semi-subterranean pithouses.

The social structure of the Secwepemc was largely egalitarian, in that social status was based on individual strengths and group productivity.

Everyone's skill was welcomed – as it improved the community's well-being.

Haig-Brown writes,

Within the Secwepemc society existed all the complexities of a culture: government, religion, science, technology, acknowledgement and celebration of life passages, traditions, and oral history, which included a theory of origin. As with all cultures, language served as an expression of and for the transmission of culture. (Haig-Brown, 1989, p.23)

The Secwepemc language served to express and maintain cultural ties through everyday communication, oral history, and storytelling. Although the Secwepemc language was not a written language, the oral tradition has passed down the histories and stories of the people for thousands of years. The Secwepemc

language belongs to the Interior Salish branch of the Salishan language family. It shares similarities with its neighbouring tribes: Nlak'pamux (Thompson), Stl'atl'imx/St'at'im (Lillooet), and Nsilx (Okanagan). There are two major Secwepemc dialects with minor dialectical differences between each band. Representing the Eastern dialect are the communities near the Shuswap Lakes, Adams Lake, Spallumcheen, and Windermere areas. The Western dialect is spoken in the Kamloops, North Thompson, Canim Lake, and Williams Lake areas.

History of Secwepemc Contact with Europeans (1794-1894)

Gradually as the Whites of this country became more and more powerful, and we less and less powerful, they little by little changed their policy towards us, and commenced to put restrictions on us. Their government or chiefs have taken every advantage of our friendliness, weakness and ignorance to impose on us in every way. (Memorial to Sir Wilfred Laurier, SNTC, 1989)

In 1763, the Royal Proclamation was established to help protect the British claim in Canada. Within the Proclamation there included a section regarding the status of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

It is just and reasonable, and essential to our interest, and the security of our colonies, that the several Nations of Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession

of such Parts of Our Dominions, and Territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds... (Royal Proclamation of 1763)

This Proclamation established the necessity for the British Crown to make treaties with the "Indians".

Between 1793 and 1812, the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company began to expand their fur trading area west of the Rockies. Alexander MacKenzie is documented as being the first white man to meet the Secwepemc in 1793. During the initial years of contact with the European newcomers, the Secwepemc played an important role in the fur trade and the local economy. The fur trade initially provided some positive benefits, particularly to the material culture of the Secwepemc. The early years of the fur trade allowed for a degree of control over the trading process and for the Secwepemc to maintain some cultural and political autonomy.

At first the Secwepemc people benefited from the fur trade, but this time of prosperity started to decline. Due to intense trapping, the beaver population diminished and the Secwepemc turned to other furbearing animals. To compound this hardship, the big game animals also began to disappear. Large herds of horses that were needed to carry furs had overgrazed local hills. The

traders at the forts also required food. According to some sources in Hudson Bay Company journals, the Secwepemc began to trade away their food sources as well as furs. In 1827 and 1829, the Hudson Bay Company traders reported starvation in the Secwepemc communities. (HBC, 1841-1862)

The end of the fur trade created a dilemma for the Secwepemc. They could see that the fur trade was not to their benefit, but their reliance on new trade items, coupled with the depletion of wildlife, prevented a return to their pre-trade lifestyle. With increased dependence on fur trade material goods, the Secwepemc became vulnerable to the forces of colonization.

The gold rush of 1858 created a population shift that saw the Secwepemc go from being a powerful majority to being a minority in their own territory. Although gold was discovered in Secwepemc land before this point, it was not until 1858 that it became widely known. The Cariboo Gold Rush peaked in 1863 with over ten thousand residents settling in Barkerville (Barman, 1991, p.73). The miners' viewpoint on land ownership was in direct contrast to that of the Hudson Bay Company. Whereas the trappers weren't interested in land ownership, the gold miners believed in owning the land they staked.

By 1864 the gold rush was ending and many of the miners decided to stay in the mining areas. The American newcomers wanted land for agricultural use. They pressured the government to find ways to remove the Secwepemc from the land to allow for the newcomers to enjoy land ownership. Between 1850 and 1854, Governor James Douglas, acting on behalf of the Hudson Bay Company, began making treaties with tribes in B.C. Under Douglas, a total of 14 treaties were established with tribes in southern Vancouver Island and near Fort Rupert.

By 1862, Douglas set out to establish reserves. There was now a sense of urgency for buying out Aboriginal rights to the land as more settlers were arriving in British Columbia. Douglas petitioned the Imperial government for money to make treaties, but to no avail. After 1859, reserves in B.C. were being established without treaties and without extinguishment of Indian land title. James Douglas sought to allocate reserves before white settlers arrived in the area and that the extent of the reserves "be defined as they may severally pointed out by the Natives themselves" (p.154, Fisher, 1977).

However, following Douglas' retirement in 1864, the Colonial Office radically changed its approach to Aboriginal affairs. Joseph Trutch was appointed Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works for B.C. Having been given more

control over land matters, Trutch set out to reduce Aboriginal land holdings. By 1867 Trutch was applying a ten-acre maximum policy throughout B.C. In the Secwepemc territory, reserves were being drastically reduced. At the Bonaparte reserve near Cache Creek, Trutch instructed his assistant O'Reilly to make drastic reductions and "as a general rule it is considered that an allotment of about ten acres of good land should be made to each family in the tribe. (Trutch to O'Reilly, 5 August 1868, Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question, p.50)

The ten-acre policy was minimal compared to the "pre-empting" process available to white settlers and to the average applied to Indian reserves nationally. In B.C. new settlers could choose a site and homestead. By tending the land for a few years they gained full legal title to the property. A married couple could pre-empt 160 acres with the option of buying adjoining land at twenty-five pence an acre. In contrast, ten acres per native family was paltry. Also, considering that the national average was at least 80 acres per family on reserves in other provinces, this amount was truly insignificant. At the same time provincial land ordinances were put in place that prohibited Indian people from pre-empting or buying land.

By the 1860s there were indications of problems within Secwepemc communities. The lack of food supply and loss of land, were further intensified with the arrival of smallpox. During the 1862-64 smallpox epidemic, ethnographer James Teit estimated that two-thirds of the Secwepemc population perished (Teit, 1909, p.463). Secwepemc society was at a greatly weakened state and vulnerable to the pressures of a colonial force. An excerpt from the 1910 petition of the Interior Chiefs to Prime Minister Laurier conveys the frustration:

They treat us less than children and allow us 'no say' in anything. They say the Indians know nothing and own nothing, yet their power and wealth has come from our belongings. The queen's law which we believe guaranteed us our rights, the B.C. government has trampled underfoot. This is how our guests have treated us - the brothers we received hospitably in our house. (Memorial to Sir Wilfred, Shuswap Nation Tribal Council, 1989)

During this period of contact, the Secwepemc had to adjust to many changes in their lifestyle. They had become marginalized people in their own territory.

Coyote Dies: The Effects of Colonization (1895-1968)

Coyote had to look - he just had to look at his tail. "Why did Brother Fox tell me not to look at it? He just doesn't want me to see how beautiful I am." Coyote slowly turns his head to

sneak a peek....SNAP! Off snaps his tail. Coyote falls to the ground. All of his innards ooze out onto the grass. He's dead, dead, dead.¹

The effects of colonization are far-reaching and long lasting. I have witnessed the effects of the residential school system and systemic oppression within my family and community. A quote from Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact (Assembly of First Nations, 1994) lists some of the effects of the residential school system on the First Nations of Canada:

- loss of memory
- loss of innocence
- loss of meaning
- loss of family
- loss of connection
- loss of language
- loss of childhood
- loss of feeling
- loss of pride
- loss of community
- loss of identity
- loss of trust
- loss of confidence
- loss of spirit
- loss of skills
- loss of morality

¹ Coyote quotes in this thesis are the author's version of traditional Coyote stories of the Secwepemc people.

loss of life
loss of control

Taken together over multiple generations, these losses constitute a massive amount of grief which up until recently, has been denied in various ways and for various reasons. (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 167-168)

This list can go on and on. But within this quote you may recognize a pattern of self-destruction that has been repeated in many aboriginal communities. If you look at the research available on colonized indigenous cultures you will find documentation on the effects of colonization. Thus it begs the question, "What can be done about the Indian problem?". Although the term "Indian" is now out of fashion, changing the label to "First Nations", "Aboriginal", or "Indigenous", isn't going to change the fact that indigenous cultures are struggling to maintain their unique cultures within a world that is rapidly changing. A by-product of this struggle has been the loss of aboriginal languages.

In British Columbia alone there are five First Nations languages that have been listed in an Assembly of First Nations (hereafter, AFN) language study as having less than 10 speakers remaining (AFN, 1992, p.8). The loss of Aboriginal languages warns of an even greater loss: of land, family histories, traditional stories, and, eventually, of hope.

Residential schools have done irreversible damage to the students who have attended, particularly to their self-esteem and to their sense of self-worth as native people. Celia Haig-Brown, in her book titled, Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School, presents the personal experiences of students of the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

Before I left [home], I was full of confidence: I could do everything that was needed to be done at home... But when I arrived here all that left me. I felt so helpless. The Shuswap language was no use to me... the supervisors couldn't understand. (Charlie:1) (Haig-Brown, 1989, p. 49)

Language is at the basis of intergenerational cultural transmission. Within a culture's language lies their distinctive way of seeing and communicating their world. The government of Canada's role in the development of the residential school policy and its consequent enactment clearly had the destruction of aboriginal language and culture in mind. In April 1930, the Government of Canada amended Section 10 of the Indian Act to further enforce school attendance.

It is now possible to compel the attendance of every physically fit Indian child between the ages of 7 and 16 years, and, in very special cases, the Superintendent General may direct that a pupil be kept in school until he has reached the full age of 18 years. (*Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended 31 March 1931*, p.12)

This amendment was part of Indian Affairs Minister's Duncan Campbell Scott's new plan to aggressively set out to "civilize" the native population. Scott (1918) wrote in his Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada:

The outlook in British Columbia is certainly encouraging; there is fine material among the natives to make good British citizens, and in two or three decades we may expect that a large number of Indians will have been absorbed into the ordinary life of the Province. (Scott, 1931, p.11)

Within Scott's plan, education was a key component in erasing aboriginal languages and cultures. By taking children into a boarding school situation the Indian child could be formed to a new more "civilized" way of behaviour. As Scott wrote:

The happiest future for the Indian race is absorption into the general population, and this is the object of the policy of our government. The great forces of intermarriage and education will finally overcome the lingering traces of native custom and tradition. (Scott, "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912", pp. 622-623)

All in all, Duncan Scott's plan proved to be very effective. Haig-Brown (1989) summarizes the effects of the residential school experience on native culture:

Again no recognition was given to the Shuswap ways and no allowance for gradual introduction of European conventions was permitted. In a systematic and rigid fashion, the Oblates demonstrated that the Shuswap cultural patterns were not acceptable in the school. In all aspects of life, from language to sleeping habits, European behaviours were to supplant those which

had been followed by generations of Shuswap people. From these first days, no concessions were made: family ties were broken, language use was forbidden, and life experiences discounted. (Haig-Brown, p. 52)

As one of the students Haig-Brown interviewed recalled,

At the Indian residential school, we were not allowed to speak our language; we weren't allowed to dance, sing because they told us it was evil. It was evil for us to practice our cultural ways.... (p.53)

The misguided actions of the Canadian government have resulted in generations of aboriginal people ashamed of their heritage. Many of the residential school survivors returned to their communities unable to embrace their cultures and languages.

They took away my belongings, they took away everything from me. Everything that's important to me, mother, father, culture. But not my spirit, no way. They stripped us of everything. Gave us brown uniforms and a number. And they put what they wanted into us, made us ashamed of who we are. Even right to this day, it still affects me. Like I really want to get into Indian things and I just can't because of them telling us it was of the devil. (SCES, 2000, p.29)

Most survivors chose to keep the language from their children to help spare them the hurt and shame they felt as a child at the residential school.

James Crawford (1997), a researcher on bilingual education writes:

Some people believe that the boarding school experience has had a delayed effect, inducing shame amongst many Indians about their

culture or at least convincing them that their languages are a source of educational difficulties. So, on becoming parents themselves, they have raised their children only or mostly in English, believing this would help them in school. In my observation, such practices are not uncommon among Indian parents even today. (Crawford, 1997,p.56)

He further comments on the decision people make to continue or not continue using their native tongue:

This is not to say that such decisions are made in a vacuum, or that they are entirely deliberate. Language choices are influenced, consciously and unconsciously, by social changes that disrupt the community in numerous ways. (p. 57)

Although the residential school system is not the only reason that the use of the Secwepemc language declined, it served to be an effective mechanism to destroy the will of an entire generation of Secwepemc people. Changes in mainstream society would also play a hand at altering the course of language survival in the Secwepemc community. It would take years before communities would begin their healing process and for Coyote to come to life again.

Coyote Awakes: Native Activism (1969-present)

Fox stumbled upon a body lying on the path. "Oh, no, it's Coyote! He's dead. He must have looked at his tail." Fox jumps over his brother three times - one, two, three. Slowly Coyote

begins to move and stretches his arms forward, "Oh, I must have been sleeping here!"

In May 1969, a group of native delegates met in Ottawa to discuss the B.C. land case. These discussions with the Trudeau government led to the drafting of a policy statement called, "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy" in June 1969. In this paper, dubbed the 'White Paper', the government proposed the abolition of Indian status, the elimination of the Department of Indian Affairs, and the turning over of reserves to private land holdings. First Nations leaders were appalled to see that their presentations and involvement in the advisory process had been so blatantly disregarded. In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood, an aboriginal rights group, published a policy statement titled, "Indian Control of Indian Education"(National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). This publication marked a resurgence of local control of education and, more importantly, an assertion of the aboriginal right to make decisions for their communities and families. The paper highlighted the need for parents to make education decisions for their own children and for traditions and cultural values to be integrated into their schooling:

Unless a child knows about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being.
(National Indian Brotherhood, 1972,p.9)

Although this policy statement was precipitated by the release of the Canadian government's "White Paper" in 1969, calling for the assimilation of the native peoples of Canada, it also served to awaken the fight for the survival of aboriginal language, culture, and identity. Throughout the 1970s and the 1980s native peoples successfully affirmed their rights to practice their cultural traditions and to educate their own children within these traditions.

From this 1993 excerpt from a United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples you will note the strength of this affirmation:

All indigenous peoples also have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. (United Nations, 1993)

Unfortunately, this affirmation of the aboriginal right to aboriginal education did not translate to there being a rapid development of aboriginal language education programs at the community level. Not enough was being done to help stop the rapid language loss in aboriginal communities throughout Canada.

Recent figures from the 2001 Census shows that over 1.3 million people reported having at least some Aboriginal ancestry in 2001, representing 4.4 % of the total population of Canada. From this total, only "198,595 Aboriginal people reported having an Aboriginal mother tongue, down 3.5% from 205,800 in 1996".

(Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 9) In British Columbia the language situation appeared significantly worse than in many areas of Canada.

Within the borders of British Columbia there are between 27 and 34 languages representing eight distinct language families (Ignace, 1998, p. 6). The fact that much of the province and therefore, native communities, are separated by mountainous terrain and waterways has proven to be problematic for communities to work together on building joint language programs and educational initiatives. Of note is the large diversity among the First Nations languages of B.C. In B.C. there are a greater number of language groups competing for financial assistance and, on average, there are smaller language populations than found in the rest of Canada.

By the 1980s, most native communities in B.C. were one or two generations removed from having children whose first languages were their aboriginal language. Almost all communities were raising their children with their first, and only language, being English. Ignace (1998) writes:

As the first generation of Residential School students became parents, they raised their own children speaking English, hoping thus to spare them the trauma and humiliation they themselves had experienced in the Residential Schools. The Residential Schools thus broke the pattern of the **intergenerational**

transmission of Aboriginal languages, which is of crucial importance to language survival... (Ignace, 1998, p.9)

The breakdown of intergenerational transmission of language was accelerated by rapid changes occurring within mainstream society. Within the workplace, the schools, and in the homes, new technologies usurped the roles of entertaining, communicating, and educating the young children from the elders of families. Electronic medium such as radio and television replaced former methods of oral cultural transmission. Monolingual children were presented with a world of English within their textbooks at school, the television shows they viewed, and in the world at large. Their ancestral languages had no place in their lives.

In Ignace's book titled, Handbook for Aboriginal Language Program Planning in British Columbia, she describes a committee formed in 1995 comprising of seven Secwepemc elders, with herself as facilitator. The committee conducted a survey of seven Secwepemc communities to determine the extent of language knowledge amongst the communities. The results supported the fear that the Secwepemc language was indeed in a critical state. A summary of the results showed:

- virtually all fluent speakers are in their fifties or older;
- even those who can speak the language often do not use it in the home, especially with younger children

- almost no children are being raised speaking the language at home; and

- to date (with the exception of an immersion program which was started in one community a few years ago), school programs have not produced proficiency or fluency in the language, and have not resulted in the use of the language, except for a few words, among younger generations (Ignace, 1995, page 14)

The sad fact was that the Secwepemc language was dying through lack of use. Entire families and communities failed to pass on the language to their children. Fluent elders saw little need to communicate in their native tongue. What was the use of continuing to speak a language no one understood? What place did the language have to the people living on reserves who were battling lifelong histories of abuse and family dysfunction? Tragically, the modern economic realities allowed no place for aboriginal languages and traditions.

The Value of Language: Identity and Personal Healing

What value can we place on one's native language? What is the value of any endangered world language? What does humankind lose when a language is lost? In Andrew Dalby's book, Language in Danger (2003), he explores how languages become extinct and the significance of that loss to all humankind. He presents the linguistic history of some of the world's major languages: English,

German, Latin, and Greek, among others. In each example, Dalby follows the path of growth or decline of the language. He surmises that the death of language occurs in a predictable pattern.

Dalby observes that the first stage of language declined is marked by a sustained encounter with another language. The relationship that is formed from this encounter dictates the extent that the two languages will change or adapt to each other's cultures. Linguistic change is inevitable when people come into prolonged contact with speakers of a different dialect or language. In many examples within linguistic history, language change such as this happens within a large-scale political shift. One such example is the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. This encounter led to major linguistic changes as the Norman invaders rapidly introduced new words to English and vice-versa. From this encounter a new form of French also developed called Anglo-Norman, with many English loanwords, such as, "alderman" and "ayle" [ale].

The long-term linguistic effect of the Norman Conquest was the incorporation of hundreds, and even thousands of French loanwords in Middle and Modern English. French influence on the English language after a 1,000 year relationship has resulted in many speakers of Modern English being able to

understand more words in French than in the closer language relative, German. Dalby proposes that language is constantly changing and that these changes occur as a result of sustained encounters with other languages.

Within linguistic history one will find evidence of major political shifts, economic changes, and colonization resulting in language loss and change. Language in Danger points out that there is a certainty of language death and that the steps leading to the death of a language will follow a predictable pattern. With prolonged contact with another culture, ultimately one culture will have shown dominance either politically or economically. Whether or not the intention of either culture is to usurp the role of the dominant language, in the end, one language will gain dominance.

Ultimately, Dalby argues for the need to save all of our earth's languages.

The knowledge that we and our children need is being lost as we destroy the languages and cultures in which that knowledge has been recorded. The insights that we can gain from understanding the worldviews embodied in other languages will soon be beyond our reach. The creativity and flexibility that our descendants will need in their language, if they are to survive and prosper, will in due course wither away. (Dalby, 2003, p.287)

In Nettle and Romaine's Vanishing Voices (2000), this argument is further supported:

Allowing languages and cultures to die directly reduces the sum total of our knowledge about the world, for it removes some of the voices articulating its richness and variety, just as the extinction of any species entails sacrificing some unique part of the environment. (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p. 199)

Another viewpoint, presented by Joshua Fishman in his paper (1996) titled 'What Do You Lose When You Lose a Language?' explores the deep relationship that exists between the "heart" of the culture and its language. He proposes that what is lost when you lose a language is essentially the "whole" of the culture. When people talk about language loss they speak in terms of the spiritual, of a sense of emotional wholeness, of completeness. Loss of language is often equated with a spiritual loss:

And that means they are going to lose the metaphor about the language being the soul of the people. The language being the mind of the people. The language being the spirit of the people. Those are just metaphors, but they are not innocent metaphors. There is something deeply holy implied, thereby, and that is what would be lost. That sense of a holy, a component of holiness that pervades people's life the way a culture pervades their life through the language. (Fishman, 1996, pp. 82-83)

This sense of sanctity attached to language is one loss associated with language.

Another idea Fishman presents is that with language loss we lose our ties with kinship. Language binds us together as community:

We are tied to each other through the language. That precious sense of community is not a thing to lose just as is the sense of

holiness. Woe to the people who have lost the sense of holiness...
(p.83)

Fishman highlights the collective emotional need for language as it relates to the internal experience.

In the same publication, Stabilizing Indigenous Languages (1996), Jon Reyhner summarizes language as being key to the psychological, social, and physical survival of humankind. As stated by anthropologist Russell Bernard,

...any reduction of language diversity diminishes the adaptational strength of our species because it lowers the pool of knowledge from which we can draw. We know that the reduction of biodiversity today threatens all of us. I think we are conducting an experiment to see what will happen to humanity if we eliminate "cultural species" in the world. This is a reckless experiment. If we don't like the way it turns out, there's no going back.
(Bernard, 1992, p.82)

Language is our link to ancient knowledge and wisdom.

In the end, what do we lose when we lose a language? I have reviewed arguments for linguistic preservation on the grounds of world knowledge, community building, and for that somewhat indescribable sense of 'holiness' that Fishman proposes. In indigenous society the loss of language is closely tied to the effects of colonization and oppression. The loss of language is just one more

casualty in a losing battle to save traditional lands, cultural autonomy, and ultimately, a sense of identity, collective and personal.

A culture cannot survive without its language. The language is an expression of the culture – it is the backbone, the identity of the people. When the language is lost the culture is crippled. And so it was the language that was the first target of the residential schools. The school officials were determined to destroy the native languages, to ensure that the Indian children would be assimilated into the white culture. In many cases they were successful. Today, it is estimated that fifty of Canada's fifty-three native languages are in danger of extinction. Thirteen languages are considered extremely endangered because they are spoken by fewer than a hundred people. Once they disappear, they will be gone forever. There are no foreign countries where the languages will be preserved. (York, 1990, p. 37)

In the end the responsibility of saving a language lies in the hands of each cultural group. We must act now to prevent this century from being known as the graveyard for indigenous languages.

Aboriginal Language Revival

Dalby (2003) estimates that we are losing our world's languages at an average of one language every two weeks. The vast majority of the languages we are losing are the world's indigenous languages. To fight against language loss many aboriginal communities are searching for ways to keep their languages from extinction. The ways in which people are working to maintain, revive, and

revitalize language are as creative and diverse as the groups themselves. For most groups the goal of language fluency is daunting; however, passionate community people from around the world are working hard to save the languages they treasure.

In The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice (2001), edited by Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale, there are several examples of aboriginal communities trying to bring their language back into everyday use. Hinton's introduction explains that all communities are unique and that they each demonstrate different stages of language loss. Therefore, language revitalization efforts in one community will ultimately differ from that of another. For example, the Navajo language, having many speakers within the community, may focus on the need for bilingual schooling, whereas, in the Chase area, attempts are being made to revitalize language use within families and the school. Despite the situational differences within communities, Hinton argues:

While some of the speech communities in this book have large populations and optimal resources, many more have tiny populations and minimal resources. No matter which end of the scale a language is on, language revitalization is complex and difficult; but it is also always possible, at least to some degree. (Hinton, 2001, p.6)

Hinton outlines five categories of language revitalization approaches:

1. school-based programs
2. children's programs outside of school (afterschool programs, summer programs)
3. adult language programs
4. documentation and materials development
5. home-based programs

School-based Language Programs

Within school-based programs, Hinton highlights three common examples. The first example is the teaching of the target language as a subject, such as many of us schooled in Canada have experienced with French. The target language is treated as another course to be taught within the school day. This method is good for developing language awareness and can also teach a basic level of communication. However, the main disadvantage with teaching language as a subject is that there usually aren't enough contact hours to bring a student to fluency (ibid, p.7). In the case of indigenous languages, this type of program is often not enough to help produce speakers of the language. Added to this is the fact that many communities offer few opportunities for the students to use the language outside of the classroom.

Bilingual education is used as another example of a school-based approach to language revitalization. In United States there have been many bilingual initiatives following funding available since the late 1970s called, Title VII bilingual education funds. The funding was targeted for minority language groups whose children's first languages were not English. In a bilingual classroom a portion of the instruction is taught in the minority language. In the case of the bilingual models in the U.S. they have been found more successful for language maintenance than for language revival. There generally exists a large discrepancy between resources and training for the English portion of the school day versus the few written materials and trained speakers available to the aboriginal language program (Hinton, pp. 7-8). In many cases there existed an underlying goal for improvement of English skills that may have undermined the community's goal of language survival.

Aboriginal Immersion Programs

In the third example of a school-based program, Hinton presents the immersion model. The immersion model in Canada is widely represented by French immersion in the public school system. This model carries out all classroom instruction in the target language. The success of an immersion

program lies in its capacity to provide sufficient exposure to the language to help produce fluent speakers. However, even within this model it is still imperative for the community to provide opportunities for further communication outside of the school program to achieve native-like fluency.

Well-known examples of aboriginal immersion programs are the Hawaiian and Maori initiatives. The indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori, are forerunners in aboriginal language revival. At the 1988 World Indigenous Education Conference held at the University of British Columbia, I was honoured to have been the recorder for a workshop presented by a number of Maori delegates. In this workshop there were presenters representing community members and staff involved in the Te Kohanga Reo movement. The Kohanga Reo is the early childhood language immersion program established in New Zealand. A presenter at the workshop explained how the original concept of Kohanga Reo stemmed from a nationwide meeting of Maori elders. Elders gathered from far and wide to discuss "Maori problems", namely high unemployment, substance abuse, violence in the homes, and low socio-economic status. At this meeting they rejected any "band-aid" approach. They noted that small attempts at many levels never provided enough sustained resources to achieve success. They realized the need for a practical solution that would take

into account their age and their limited resources. They decided to focus their attention on the very young by providing programs that would link babies with elders to provide a cultural upbringing in the Maori language. This decision was considered a preventative approach to Maori problems.

The root of the Maori language initiative lies in the strength and commitment of the Maori elders. By 1988 over 600 Kohanga Reo programs were operating throughout New Zealand (King, 2001, p.119). From its inception, the Kohanga Reo movement has sparked language and cultural revival in New Zealand. At present, Kohanga Reo programs are available in most communities, but there are now also immersion schools within the public school system, technical programs delivered in Maori, and Maori degree programs at the university level.

In 1996 the New Zealand census for the first time included a question about language use in the home; 155,669 Maori (29% of the Maori population) indicated that they knew enough Maori to be able to hold an everyday conversation. (ibid, p.121)

The Maori language movement has also served to inspire many other aboriginal language efforts. Perhaps the most notable influence has been on their Polynesian neighbours, the Hawaiians. In 1984, Hawaiian language preschools called Punana Leo began. These programs were modeled after Kohanga Reo,

and at present, are serving some 14,000 children (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p.180). The Hawaiian language resurgence has also filtered to other parts of the community. All levels of schooling are available in Hawaiian, as well as many publications and electronic media.

In Canada, the longest standing aboriginal immersion efforts have been from the Mohawks of Kahnawake. The Mohawk community of Kahnawake, a reserve near the city of Montreal, has seen the decline of their traditional language from the 19th century onwards. By the 1950s most Kahnawake parents were raising their children exclusively in English (Hoover&KRCC, 1992, p.270). The Quebec government's enactment of the French Language Charter sparked a new generation of language revival in Kahnawake. Bill 101 sought to impose French language laws on the reserve and to restrict services in languages other than French. In solidarity towards preservation of the Mohawk language, two major developments occurred in the community. First, the Kanien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Centre was established which today houses over 3,000 documents on Mohawk culture. Following this, in 1979, was the opening of the Mohawk Survival School, the first aboriginal immersion program in Canada. The immersion program was modeled after the French immersion programs already

underway in Canada. Today, more than half of the community's children attend the immersion school from nursery school to Grade 6 (ibid, p.271).

Chapter Two Summary

The Maori, Mohawk, and Hawaiian language programs have served to inspire many other aboriginal groups seeking to save their languages from extinction. The process of revitalizing language in aboriginal communities is indeed difficult and emotional.

What is the relationship between culture and healing? There is an intense link between cultural identity, self-esteem, and feelings of personal control. Discovery and understanding of one's culture can have an absolutely revolutionary and transformative effect on personality and, in particular, on motivation. Personal healing journeys often begin with just such moments of revelation. (Warry, 1998, p.221)

Communities struggling from the effects of colonization and the residential school program often turn to their own culture to help connect with their past and their identity.

In Canada, there exists a sense of urgency in many aboriginal communities over the rapid loss of their language speakers. The task of dealing with other societal problems associated with the impact of colonialism is further

magnified by the loss of culture and language. Often communities are overwhelmed by the enormity of their problems that they are unable to make effective changes to stem the loss of language. Perhaps with the inspiration and support of innovative immersion programs such as those of the Maori, the Hawaiian, the Mohawk, and the Secwepemc, more communities will be better prepared for the challenge of saving a language.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Every living person is a partial revelation to the truth Gandhi

Outline of Research

This chapter outlines the methodology I have used in conducting my research. The focus of my research is on the personal and collective value placed on indigenous language learning by documenting the experiences of the staff, parents, and students of Chief Atahm School. A qualitative approach was used to discover the connections that exist between heritage language learning and personal growth and healing.

Both qualitative and quantitative researchers are concerned about the individual's point of view. However, qualitative investigators think that they can get closer to the actor's perspective through detailed interviewing and observation. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.10)

The outcome of my research presents, in essence, a collage of voices, each an expression of their unique relationship to the world around them. What binds these voices together is their common association and involvement with the language immersion program at Chief Atahm School. To capture their voices, one-on-one interviews were conducted, recorded on tape, then transcribed.

Through the use of the phenomenological approach to qualitative research I have attempted to reveal the patterns and the personal revelations to get to the heart of my informants' experiences within the Chief Atahm School language programs. As phenomenological research often involves the search for commonalities amongst individuals, I have grouped themes together to discover the "essence" of personal involvement in language immersion programming.

I believe that the qualitative approach is the best vehicle for expressions of "feeling", of values, and personal aspects of healing as it relates to language revival. As qualitative researchers it is important to remember that:

It is ethically imperative for us to be translators who recount the stories told at the borders of our country's identity with the fervor that speaks of both the community of survival and of the fragmented quality of life, of dominant and subdominant, of the powerful and the powerless, of the intolerant and the tolerant, of the secure and of the angered, of the immoral and of the moral, of the complacent and the empowered. (Janesick, 1998, pp.126-127)

Through the use of interviews each participant is able to share their unique experiences. I also believe that this method of documenting personal experience provides a closer connection to the, often inexplicable, spiritual realm.

Research Context: Chief Atahm School Profile

All research was conducted on the Adams Lake Indian Reserve #4 (Sexqeltqin) across the South Thompson River Bridge from Chase, British Columbia. The population of the reserve is approximately 400 people. Chief Atahm School is situated on the Adams Lake Reserve, although the school's catchment area extends well beyond these borders. Students come from the surrounding Chase bands of Neskonlith and Little Shuswap, as well from the town of Chase, to attend the immersion program. A bus service from Whispering Pines Band (a 1.5 hr. drive away) transports children to the school and picks up students from the city of Kamloops. Although the students come from several locations, the school population itself only averages about 42 students per year.

There is no definitive reason why the school has not attracted more students, although some parents have expressed concern about the immersion model. The common fear, and perhaps misconception, is that immersion schooling will jeopardize their child's English education and ruin their chances to go to university. Another reason often cited is that a First Nations school promotes segregation of the races and prevents children from learning how to associate with their peers. For a variety of personal reasons many parents have

decided against sending their children to the local band-operated school. The majority of children from Adams Lake Band are presently attending the public school in Chase.

Despite community pressures and lack of resources Chief Atahm School has persevered. In 1988 the first immersion development began on the Adams Lake Reserve. In 1992, the first immersion preschool and kindergarten program was started. Each subsequent year another grade level of immersion was added to Grade 3. From that point onwards the bilingual program was developed for the intermediate and high school grades. The immersion program has steadily developed a well-rounded program to support Secwepemc language and cultural learning within a strong academic setting.

The development of the Chief Atahm School program has been a collaborative effort between the parents and elders of the school community. The school is operated through the Tek'wemiple, the parent-run school council. Each year the school community revisits the school vision and philosophy. The school vision is of "a Secwepemc speaking community living in balance with nature". Programs are put in place to help achieve this vision. The most notable is the immersion component, but many other programs have been implemented

that support the concept of culture and sustainability. Other programs include: the traditional resource gathering and crafts program, building skills and gardening programs, and the nutritional hot lunch program.

Community Protocol

To respect local government authorities, a letter requesting permission to conduct research on Adams Lake Band (see Appendix 1) was given to the Chief and Council of Adams Lake Band. The Chief and Council approved the request through a Band Council Resolution (see Appendix 2). After receiving approval, I initiated contact with the Chief Atahm School administrator to outline the intent of my research. The research process required input from members of the Chief Atahm School community who had been involved with the establishment of the program and/or had a longstanding involvement with the language immersion program. The Chief Atahm School community defined would be the staff, parents, elders, and involved community participants. It was understood that all research involvement would be voluntary and would not involve any minor children. The cross-section of research participants were:

- 4 Secwepemc elders/language teachers
- 4 classroom teachers

- 3 parents of students attending the immersion program
- 2 former students of the immersion school

Research Techniques

Interviews with participants were audiotaped to gather data to support the thesis. A list of questions was initially submitted to the Simon Fraser University Board of Ethics for approval. The interview questions were grouped into three parts: personal information, participant's involvement with language revitalization and Chief Atahm School, and personal growth. All participants were asked the same questions (see Appendix 3), some with small deviations to the questions for clarification or to extend answers beyond one or two word responses. The development of the research questions were based on my own personal experiences and involvement in Chief Atahm School as well as on the secondary research I had done on language revitalization. From 1987 to present my role at Chief Atahm School have included duties as classroom teacher, curriculum developer, administrator, researcher, and language nest coordinator. I referred to a number of resources on indigenous language teaching and language revival and relied on my own personal experience to generate interview questions. Interviews ranged from a half hour to one hour in duration. Within the semi-structured open-ended interviews, some participants required additional

questions in order for me to elicit a more detailed response. All of the questions contained the general substance of the original list of questions.

Transcriptions were made of all interviews and were used to identify recurring themes and issues. It was agreed to by all respondents that the written research and recorded data be stored at Chief Atahm School archives with the understanding that participants may only access their own records. The decision to store all research data for archival purposes was agreed upon by all participants as an important step in documenting the history of Chief Atahm School. All names of those interviewed have been changed to ensure anonymity and to respect the individuals involved. Before completion of the research all transcriptions were shared with each participant for their approval. After receiving approval from all participants I continued with the compilation of my research.

During the process of developing a set of interview questions I predicted that there would be a range of responses from all participants. However, it was my hypothesis that the responses would fall into a pattern based on age groups and generations. For example, I thought the fluent elders/language teachers would consist of one generation who would share similar answers; the non-fluent

teachers and parents would share similarities; and finally the student would share a different experience. These predictions were part of my personal bias in my research. All research is, ultimately, influenced by the researcher itself. As a staff member at Chief Atahm School I was aware that it would be impossible to present myself as a neutral researcher. On the other hand, my familiarity with the participants may invite more intimate sharing. The research participants might have been more willing to share their experiences with someone they knew rather than with a stranger.

I attempted to detach myself as much as possible from my role within Chief Atahm School. By sending each participant official request letters I behaved in a more "formal" manner than usual. I then followed up with scheduling interviews at the subjects' own residences when possible. I conducted as many of the interviews as I could away from the school buildings. Before beginning each interview I introduced myself and went over the informed consent information. By the time the interviews began, I felt I had established myself in a new identity that was more neutral than our usual interpersonal relationship. This new role was an attempt to allow for more freedom for the participants to express their own experiences without filtering out details for my benefit. Throughout the interview process I was mindful that "part of the

philosophy of qualitative interviewing is that interviewees and interviewers are both individuals, with emotions and interests and biases that affect how research is done" (Rubin/Rubin, p.14, 1995). I was always aware that I would bring my own biases to the interview process, and therefore, attempted to establish a nearly neutral identity.

Ethical Considerations

In adherence to Simon Fraser University standards of research ethics I completed an ethics application and began my research only after receiving approval from the Board of Ethics. Throughout my research I provided informed consent to all participants and discussed with each one the nature of their involvement as well as the intended use of my research. I informed them of the storage procedures I had arranged with Chief Atahm School. All participants were given the choice of having their documentation destroyed or stored after the thesis was completed. Within my thesis I have given each participant a pseudonym in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

As well as the standard ethical considerations I was bound to by the university, I conducted my research within a cultural framework established by my community and culture. In all respects, I went into this study with "my heart

in the right place". I was mindful that the results of this study was a representation of the spirit of Chief Atahm School and that I, as the storyteller, had a responsibility to carry this spirit forward. I have attempted to share their message in order to open others to the gift of language and culture. I have woven the quotes from participant interviews into a narrative to try to communicate the essence of the Chief Atahm School experience.

The Interview Participants

Interview participants were selected based on having a long-standing involvement with the language programs at Chief Atahm School. To research the possibility of a link between heritage language learning, identity and personal healing, I felt it important to interview staff, parents, elders, and students to show the multiple layers of issues and differences between the generations and also, to some degree, the similarities of experiences. All participants are First Nations people who, either attended, taught at, or enrolled their children in the school's language programs during the school's formative years. Most of the participants maintain to this day some degree of participation in the school, except for the two students who have since graduated. The two students were chosen because they are the only students who were schooled at Chief Atahm

School for an extended length of time and who have reached the age of majority. I felt it was important to select participants with a longstanding involvement with the school in order to compare people's experiences within a single phenomenon, the development of Chief Atahm School.

The strength and commitment of the school's founding group, the three parents interviewed, as well as the four teachers, is demonstrated within another shared phenomenon. Outside of the obvious link of being involved in the school's immersion program, all were non-fluent speakers of the Secwepemc language prior to their involvement with Chief Atahm School. All seven had parents who had attended residential school and who did not teach their children to communicate at home in the Secwepemc language. Also, all seven of these participants had voluntarily enrolled in adult language classes and summer immersion programs to increase their language fluency. This group has an easier time expressing their thoughts on language and identity and personal healing than the elders or the group representing the Chief Atahm School students. The two other groups, the elders and the students, had never experienced not having a heritage language, so were unable to imagine a life without it, or had difficulty answering questions surrounding language and identity.

Data Interpretation

I reviewed the transcriptions of the interviews to establish an initial sense of structure within them. In order to best summarize the personal experiences I searched for common themes or recurring patterns. I highlighted for future reference all unique statements attributable to one or a few. Although many direct quotes were not used in the final writing of this paper, many of those omitted were just as powerful as the ones used. A major source of frustration was trying to choose the best voice to express certain meanings.

Understandably, all of my choices have been influenced by my own upbringing and communication preferences, and therefore, should only be interpreted as a representation of the Chief Atahm School community through my perspective.

Chapter Three Summary

Throughout the research process I was aware of the responsibility I had for protecting and preserving the integrity of the research participants and Chief Atahm School, as well as for preserving my integrity as a researcher. As an indigenous organization, Adams Lake Band has had numerous requests from researchers to conduct a variety of studies on reserve. In some cases the experience was not reciprocal in that the research neither benefited the band nor

the community. At times the participants felt they were "used" in the process. I feel that I have taken the appropriate steps within my research to prevent any abuse of power or trust I may hold as a researcher. My research has been a sincere attempt to communicate the intent of the Chief Atahm School community.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The participants of this study were limited to people with a long history of involvement at Chief Atahm School. In fact, three of the people interviewed were founding members of the school. Other participants interviewed had been involved with the school programs, in some capacity or other, for eight or more years. My intent for the interview process was to ask open-ended questions that would prompt participants to share their personal experiences, and, in particular, their feelings, opinions, and reactions to Chief Atahm School in relation to issues of language, identity, and personal healing. The focus of my study was not on the day-to-day administrative running of the school, nor the actual school curriculum, teaching or learning, but rather, the affective response of the school community to the intergenerational transmission of language and its relationship to their perceptions of identity.

The interview questions were divided into three main areas:

1. Personal information

- To establish profiles of the participants through collecting personal data, such as age, birthplace, and early family life.
2. Language knowledge and the nature of participant's involvement with Chief Atahm School
 - To demonstrate the levels of language fluency prior to the opening of Chief Atahm School and present day.
 - To establish levels of language use prior to involvement in Chief Atahm School and after becoming involved.
 - To establish the participant's role in the school program.
 - To complete personal profiling regarding employment.
 3. Personal growth
 - To allow for a variety of opportunities for each participant to express his or her feelings and beliefs regarding learning language or using the language.
 - To probe the possible link between heritage language learning and personal growth.
 - To allow participants to add any comments they wished to express on the subject of Chief Atahm School.

Upon reviewing the audio recordings and transcriptions, it became clear to me that, although there were many similarities in the interviews, there were obvious differences, particularly between the generations. In the following pages I will provide a summary of the research and provide a commentary of the main insights I have gathered from this study. Although many participant responses were similar, I have chosen to quote what I felt were responses that most aptly articulated respective points of view.

Participant Personal Histories

In general, the respondents represented three main age groups or generations of people. The most obvious grouping is the elders/language teachers. The following list identifies similarities among this group.

1. All of the elders are in their late sixties and early seventies.
2. They were raised in agricultural settings, on farms, with their extended families. Parts of the years of their childhoods were spent hunting and fishing and doing traditional Secwepemc activities, such as berrypicking and root digging.
3. All elder participants had the Secwepemc language as their first language.
4. All had attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School.
5. All chose not to teach their children the Secwepemc language.

The next generation represented were the children of the "elders" generation. The groups in the study representing this generation were the teachers and the parents of students attending Chief Atahm School. The similarities of this group included:

1. Ages ranged from 37 years to 58 years.
2. All attended public school.

3. All had either very limited knowledge of the Secwepemc language, or no knowledge of the Secwepemc language.
4. All had parents who attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School.
5. All had participated in adult language programs at Chief Atahm School.

The final group studied were the students who had attended Chief Atahm School. Only two students were interviewed and were chosen based on having reached the age of majority (19 years) and for having been enrolled in the language programs at Chief Atahm School for over eight years. The similarities of this group were:

1. Both are nineteen years old.
2. Both are male.
3. Both have parents who are founding members of Chief Atahm School.
4. Both can speak, read, and write the Secwepemc language.
5. They both attended the Secwepemc Ka Language Nest as preschoolers.
6. They have both graduated from high school.

Although all the research participants can be divided into generational representations, all respondents have in common a similar ethnic background

and have participated in programs at Chief Atahm School. Through sharing a common ethnic heritage, all participants have been influenced to varying degrees by the forces of colonization, the impact of the residential school program, and the experience of being a marginalized member of British Columbian society.

Summary of the Personal Histories of the Language Teachers/Elders

The eldest participants of this study are the language teachers of Chief Atahm School. It is important to honour the language teachers as a dynamic group of people who have generously shared their knowledge of traditional culture and language with the school community. Early on in the development of the school's program, the elders offered ample support both in the classroom and community. The success of the school's language programs lies directly in the solid foundation of teaching and support provided by the Chief Atahm School elders.

The language teachers/elders who participated in this study shared similar childhoods. The language teachers/elders all identified themselves as having been born into a lifestyle that was largely agrarian, with some Secwepemc

traditional harvesting activities done throughout the year. William, one of the male teaching staff recalls:

And we had a big strawberry farm, potatoes, a potato farm... and I guess about 10 acres. Two acres, no, one acre of strawberries, raspberries about half, about a quarter of an acre, and many different other vegetables. Sometime my dad and uncles would acquire a pig by trade, sometimes. But they butcher that all the time... we were self-sufficient.

The three female elders, Grace, Rose, and Helen, also describe their early childhoods as being spent on farms living in a self-sufficient manner. Jack, another elder in the study recalls his early life:

Nearly everyone was quite fluent and quite a number of people still were practicing some of the old ways of food gathering and old ways of hunting and fishing combined with working for wages or working for money. So they could possibly live with just four months work, the rest would be supplemented by their traditional food gathering ways.

The elders all recalled living their early lives in a largely monolingual culture, with little contact with the English-speaking world.

However, their early lives were drastically changed by their enforced enrollment in the Kamloops Residential School. All of the elders in the study were born between 1929 and 1939. This time frame coincided with a general

aboriginal population increase in Kamloops and the surrounding areas. As Haig-Brown (1989) wrote:

Rising birth rates and enforced attendance after 1920 provided students not only for these [provincial] schools, but also an increasing number for the residential school. (p.32, Haig-Brown, 1989)

Two of the elder respondents in the present study recalled the changes in their lives when they first had to go live ten months of the year at the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

...that year, 1942, I was recruited to what they call residential school. We went in cold feet, I guess, cold, no prior English language background. And from there I gradually made it to all these A, B, C's. Grade A, grade 1A, grade 2A, and it came in a little ladder right up to grade one. (William)

Jack, who entered school at a later age, talks about the changes of language use he went through.

Up to age eight, nearly nine years old, the only language I used and heard was the Secwepemc language. So up to that time I was fully immersed in the Secwepemc language, Secwepmectsin. My grandfathers, my grandmothers, my father and my mother, my aunties, and other older people around me, spoke Shuswap. And I understood the stories that they told at that time. Now after nine years old I left the language for ten months of the year to attend the Indian School at Kamloops. But in returning in the summer, I was able to return to the language because of the people around me still used the language as their first language of communication.

The language teachers/elders who participated in this study are all Adams Lake Band members who share many similarities in their childhood environments and educational experiences. Having lived through a trying period of Secwepemc history, these elders have shown fortitude and vision in helping to preserve the Secwepemc culture and language.

Summary of the Personal Histories of the Classroom Teachers and Parents

In 1951, major revisions to the Indian Act made it possible for native children to attend public schools. In 1968, the Kamloops Indian Residential School ceased to exist as an educational institution. It continued operation as a boarding home for children in care until 1978. By the late 1960s, all of the elder respondents in this study were married and were raising families. Their children were all attending public schools. Although all native children were now integrated into mainstream society, it was not without its problems. Some of the respondents representing this generation in my study recalled that not only was there a lack of acknowledgement of their culture and heritage within their schooling, but also within their family life.

I didn't know that I was an Indian, or even what an Indian was, not up until, oh, geez, probably Grade 6. Now that's embarrassing,

isn't it? I remember this big fat kid pushed me in the playground after school. He was calling me "squaw" and his friend was laughing. I didn't know what that meant, but I knew it wasn't good. I had to go home and look it up. I remember being so angry at my family for not telling me. I felt so stupid, 'cause now that I knew, it was like, everything became so clear, and I felt so ashamed to be different. (Jen)

This respondent was raised in the city with parents who were both fluent speakers of the Secwepemc language. Like most parents who attended residential school, her parents chose not to teach their children about their language or even, their heritage.

Participants from this group expressed that within their childhood years they were aware of certain pressures from within the home and their school life to conform to the outside world. Lisa, one of the teachers, describes herself sarcastically as, "one of the success stories". This comment is made in reference to her being raised in an era of increased integration into the dominant society. Her parents would make subtle or even overt comments, such as, "be like the white man" and "beat the white man at his own game". She interpreted such comments to mean she was to succeed in school and in her career, even if it meant denying or suppressing her cultural identity.

You think as a native person living in British Columbia that I was the successful story. Because I had gone through education,

gotten my degree, was teaching, was guaranteed to be in the school system, the public school system. I mean, my pension was taken care of. And I think at that time too, I was gathering all my diamonds too, if that makes sense, looking the part.

The children of parents who attended residential schools were often raised in an environment of conflicting messages about their native heritage and history. The goal of the residential school system to "christianize and civilize" First Nations was internalized by many people who had attended the schools.

Ultimately, when former residential school students became parents, they internalized negative messages about their culture and identity. In many cases, the choice to raise their children like the "white man" was an attempt to protect their children from discrimination and to provide them with the tools they needed to exist in the outside world.

The children of the survivors of the residential school generation have inherited a legacy of shame, loss, and disillusionment. This generation can be characterized as having been raised as monolingual English speakers with limited Secwepemc cultural experience. Within this generation we see increased Anglo-Canadian cultural influence within the schools and the workplace. The sad fact is that this group represents an era of language shift from the Secwepemc

language to English and the end to the natural cycle of intergenerational transmission of language.

Summary of the Personal Histories of the Students

As noted previously, the two students participating in this study are former students of Chief Atahm School. In their early years they both attended the Secwepemc immersion early childhood program called Secwepemc Ka Daycare. From there they were both registered at Chief Atahm School for the inaugural year of the Secwepemc immersion program. One of the students, Alex, had been in the immersion program for ten years. Matt, the other student in the study, had been in the language program for eight years. Other than having the remarkable distinction of perhaps being two of the few fluent Secwepemc speakers in their age group, they are your typical, laid-back teenagers. Both of the young men have lived both on and off reserve throughout their lives. Alex has graduated from the local public high school on an academic program and has represented his school district as the First Nations valedictorian. His valedictorian speech was delivered in English and in the Secwepemc language.

Matt completed his high school requirements through upgrading courses taken at a local college. Presently Matt is taking first year science courses at university.

Many of Matt and Alex's peers who attended public school throughout their lives were not exposed to cultural teachings. Even if they were introduced to native history in the classroom, often the First Nations units presented would be about the Cree or Haida Nations. Alex notes that there are differences between his Secwepemc peers with whom he attended public high school:

...when people ask questions, like, "How do you say this?", people, my peers that don't know the language...it seems like they're not quite embarrassed, but they just kind of shy away because they don't know what to say. But if people ask me how to say this in your language I'm able to tell them. And I know a lot of things about the environment, like plant names and stuff like that.

To say the least, Matt and Alex are unique. The vast majority of First Nations young people lack language and cultural teaching at home or at school. These two young men represent the resurgence of intergenerational language transmission.

Language Use and Levels of Fluency

- **Language Shift**

Language shift is defined as the point of time when a heritage language that was once active in the home is replaced by the language of the dominant culture. Within the participant interviews there were indications that language shift occurred between the mid 1950s to present day within the Secwepemc community. The language teachers/elders all recalled growing up in Secwepemc speaking households. Their experiences at the Kamloops Indian Residential School had influenced their choice to raise their children in English. One of the elder respondents shares his thoughts about his decision when one of his adult children asked him, "Why did you not teach us our language?"

Now my wife and I thought about that, thought about that very deeply. We thought at the time when we stopped using the language with our children around, was that the way to go was to speak English so that they can be helped with business, helped socially. But they were hungering for the language that we were not teaching. (Jack)

Another language teacher/elder tries to reconcile her decision to not teach her children the language:

My husband and I thought we were doing the best for our children. We were hoping they would go on to university and everything...

they would never need the language. And now, when I think back, the joy I have in knowing the language, in using it, and knowing who I am, I guess I could say I almost feel guilty. I wonder why I did that. I think I didn't put thought to it. And I say, "holy cow", somebody just about won. We just about got this colonization. They just about succeeded. The government just about succeeded. But for some reason my children seemed to have a grip on something and we got yanked back into the language and the way I feel about the language. I am so proud of it and I love it. And it is a terrible thing I did to my own children. (Helen)

Many First Nations people who had attended residential schools chose not to raise their children in their first languages. This phenomenon is a common response of marginalized cultures living within a dominant culture.

One of the language teachers linked his decision to raise his children in English to economic advantages:

...before going to school I often hear my parents say that the language wouldn't do us any good in finding work and everything like that. Why you kept us in school was that we could find work outside the village, and this is what I was doing when I was growing up and when I was raising a family. I was living outside my reserve and not thinking at all. I was just thinking about my work, what I done during the day to bring home the bacon, as it were. But I didn't even give them one idea about the language. (William)

The 1960s represented a time of great social and cultural change within the Secwepemc culture. The residual effects of colonization affected all the respondents to some degree.

• Levels of Fluency

ELDERS/LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Participants spanned at least three generations each representing various levels of language fluency. When asked to describe their language fluency or ability to communicate in the Secwepemc language, most participants gave a modest ranking to their abilities. Even the elders, who had spoken the language since infancy, defined their language competence as lacking in certain areas. Helen credits most of her language fluency to her grandmother who passed away when she was seven. After that, more English began being introduced into her home and there was a noticeable decrease of cultural activities. At nine years old she started at the residential school.

...in speaking, I'm perfect, I am a perfect speaker. But in understanding - I think there is some words that I have not heard or learned because of people already speaking English when I was home. Or I wasn't around them when they spoke because we were a small family and I didn't hear a lot of words, but the words that my grandmother was involved with, and my mother. I know I am very fluent in all their words, but there were areas like trapping and stuff. I heard them, but not in total, because I was never involved in trapping or hunting and I wasn't a boy to be taken with uncles or *Sle7e* [grandfather] or somebody.

Jack, another language teacher/elder, felt he missed out on valuable cultural teachings during the winter months that he was away at residential school.

Now one regret I have is that I didn't spend the winter months with the language. I missed the mountain activities of our people. So, in that sense, I had to listen very carefully when they were talking about their winter activities, their late fall activities, in order to visualize it more fully. So my fluency was lacking a little bit in the sense that I missed the winter talk that the other people had.

Already in the language teachers/elders group we notice the beginnings of language shift.

PARENT/TEACHERS

By the next generation we see even more evidence of language loss. Patrick, a teacher at the school, talks about the low priority or status the Secwepemc language had when he was growing up. He also notes the change of attitude his parents had later in life regarding the importance of their heritage language.

My fluency is quite low. I started about four or five years ago actively learning the language. When I grew up I wasn't taught the language. My parents didn't want to teach us at the time. But over the last 20 years, they have changed and I have changed.

All participants from the parents and teachers group did not consider themselves to be fluent speakers of the Secwepemc language, although three of the participants had some exposure to the language in their homes in their childhoods. Tina, one of the two oldest participants from the parent and teacher group, described being exposed to the language in her childhood. Through her

own research and by taking language classes she has increased her language abilities.

I guess I am semi-fluent. I can read the language, I can write the language, I can understand fluently and my speaking is semi-fluent. I'm fairly fluent, but not fluent like an elder.

She recalls her early exposure to the language:

When I was growing I could always understand the language because I was raised by grandparents and I heard the language all the time. I heard it at home and I heard it with other elders when we went visiting other elders, because we always had to go with them.

Although Tina was able to understand the Secwepemc language she was not expected to speak it. She responded in English, and therefore, did not develop her ability to speak in the Secwepemc language. Tina's family was a bilingual three-generation household wherein it was possible to be understood in either language. Interestingly enough, Tina had two older siblings who did develop the ability to speak in the Secwepemc language in their early years. Language shift was occurring in her family from the Secwepemc language to English.

Patrick, a teacher at the school recalls:

I spent a lot of time with my grandmother and grandfather and I realize I must have known a lot of the language because as people

bring it up now I know what they are talking about. But at the time you just react to when they are telling you to do certain things.

Another participant had memories of using the language at home during his early childhood. Although both parents communicated to him in English, Danny, a parent, recalls living with both of his grandmothers when his parents went to work in logging camps. Both grandmothers communicated largely in the Secwepemc language and had limited English skills. Danny remembers having a good comprehension of the language, but doesn't recall speaking the language. After the interview, Danny commented that he probably did speak the Secwepemc language as a child but will have to try to work through the "emotional block" which he feels is preventing him from remembering. Danny attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School for Grades 1 to 3.

I remember I think my first time getting on that bus, not a bus, I'm sorry, a cattle truck, a sheep truck with a rack, with my father and mother and myself, waiting with many other kids in the middle of the community, here, with my little suitcase. And my Dad telling me that I am going to a good place, not to worry. And lifting me up on the truck to go to school, with all these other kids that had to be picked up from Enderby, Salmon River, Gleneden, Salmon Arm, Neskonlith #3 and Squilax. We already had a full load this was the last stop, here. I recall going down the highway with a bunch of other kids, and I recall getting picked on by older kids, I still recall that ride down, or most of the ride, many, many years ago.

I guess the first year you really kind of, it wasn't good like your parents said you were going away to a good school. And going there as a 7 year old in a different environment, and a couple of

days later getting your hair all cut off, shave it off short, and getting your clothes taken away and getting identical shirts, and pants, and socks and running shoes with numbers on there. You became a number, your name was never called, it was a number. And not being able to see your parents from Labor Day `til June 30th the following year. For the first two years, grade 1 & 2 that was my situation. I didn't get to see my parents from Labor Day until June 30th.

During this time he was subjected to physical punishment for being caught speaking his language.

I recall getting pushed into a hot shower with just the hot water running with three other boys, because we were caught saying some Shuswap words, Secwepemc words. They may have said [Secwepemc word] or something like that and we got caught. And we were pushed into a shower with just the hot water running, and we had a bar of homemade soap put in our mouths, stuck in our mouths for all that time. And we weren't let outta there, our bodies were just beet red. So that is an example of, I will never forget that. Why we were pushed in there, I don't know. And later on you find out that's why – never to mutter Shuswap words again. So those kind of treatments that went on and on and on is what takes away your sense of living for your community I think, and your mother and your father and your *Kye7e* & *Sle7e* [grandparents]. So a lot of that is beat out of you.

Of the three participants who had a greater exposure to the language, Danny is perhaps the only one who participated in speaking the language as a child. However, a negative experience at the residential school also made it more difficult for him to later relearn his language.

Lisa and Debbie (teachers at the school), both came from households with limited exposure to the language and limited contact to cultural activities. Lisa describes the process of learning language through working at Chief Atahm School.

I probably started my language learning about twelve, thirteen years ago, and my understanding was very limited to "yes" and "no", very few words. And I started my learning when I started teaching at the Chief Atahm Immersion School. I would sit in classes with the children and learn with them. And no, I was not a speaker for about a year and a half with the program. Just my only responses were "yes" and "no". And I didn't know how to put together a sentence for probably that amount of time.

In Debbie's case, she took the opportunity to enroll her child at the school and then later was inspired to learn the language herself.

Well, when I was growing up we never learnt the language and then when we would go and visit my grandparents in Lillooet, my grandparents would be arguing in their language, and I would be, like, "boy, what are they saying, I wish I knew what they were saying". And then when I got the part time job here at the school, [child's name] had just turned five in July and I said, well they have a kindergarten program, like, oh my gosh, that would be so awesome if he could learn the language, that would be so awesome. He would be that much further ahead, I think anyway, culturally.

Debbie credits the school for helping her with learning the language.

When I first came to Chief Atahm School there is language everywhere, so I said, okay, I better learn or move on out of here.

So I started attending adult classes and then I attended two summers of immersion courses and that really boosted my language and understanding. And then I took some more University courses in Kamloops on the Shuswap language.

Within the stories from people involved with Chief Atahm School, the pattern of language loss is apparent. However, emerging from their stories comes a sense of language renewal and hope for the future.

FORMER CHIEF ATAHM SCHOOL STUDENTS

The revival of intergenerational transmission of language is a result of the school language's programs. Alex, a former student, describes his language fluency developed at Chief Atahm School:

I wouldn't say I'm completely fluent, because there's lots of words I don't know. But I can converse with elders with ease, and I can say a lot of, or most words, that are required of me to converse in conversations.

Participants had various personal histories that resulted in a wide variety of fluency levels. All respondents shared that the levels of usage of the language increased dramatically through the influence of the Chief Atahm School programs. All participants communicated a desire to strengthen their language use and fluency whether their first language was the Secwepemc language or learned later in life within a structured school setting.

Personal Value Placed on Knowing the Secwepemc Language

ELDERS/LANGUAGE TEACHERS

During each interview participants were asked to express their personal values regarding the Secwepemc language. Although, many found it difficult to put into words, some expressed their thoughts quite eloquently. One of the language teachers talked about the benefits of sharing her knowledge.

... I'm happy because I'm involved in this success, in this pride. In the value – in returning the value of our language. It would have died and I'm still not sure that we can really manage, that we can let it live forever. But I think if we hang in there, I think we have a chance. And more people should become convinced.

William, an elder, feels the school program has played a role in helping him maintain his sobriety.

...before even being involved with Chief Atahm or the language I had to see myself, what I was doing out there in the world. I had to first of all straighten myself out. Then when I straightened out, I guess this is, so anyway, the language and involvement in the language has really strengthened my will to never ever have another drink. It was my problem before, was my life problem. Now I am so involved in the language I seem to, I mean really, have replaced those meetings that I used to go to called A.A, to reinforce that I stay sober. But now the language comes natural. Everything I do just makes me forget about where I was before I sobered up. And now, you know, I think lots in the language and I do lots of praying in the language and with the people I meet. I got

to fight to remember sometimes, but it feels good...that is funny that is how I think. But getting involved has brought me to realize life is really how it should be with me at this age. And I am happy involved with the language, it has given me strength to live a better life in anything I do.

FORMER CHIEF ATAHM SCHOOL STUDENTS

From the Chief Atahm School student perspective, Alex felt that knowing his language and history has helped him developing a broader perspective on the world.

I think that I have a lot more broader perspective on things, like knowing what I know of Secwepemc history and native history and knowing my language. I think I have a wider perspective on most things and am able to make, like, on current issues and stuff like that, I'm able to make judgments on what's going on in the world around me.

PARENT / TEACHERS

Patrick, a teacher, credits the school program with helping to strengthen his sense of identity, as well as helping him regain his language.

I think the opportunity to find out who you are, and where you fit in your family and your community, and how do you relate to this land we've been living on, these are questions I have always had since I was small. But it is only since I've come to Chief Atahm School that I have been able to actually answer some of those questions. And I think the questions gnaw on you if you have no answer. Now, being here, if people ask me where are you from, and where are you living...I am living in Adams Lake I can now show them. When they say, "What did they do there, who are the people?", and I can actually answer them. So many of the

unanswered questions I've had for so long are answered and I think this just frees you up to do other things. You are not wasting time wondering about who you are and where you fit.

Lisa, a teacher, recalls a beautiful moment while teaching in her immersion classroom when everything seemed to come into place for her, symbolizing the circle becoming complete. The memory is perhaps bittersweet, when she compares her own childhood memories of being raised without the culture and language.

...it was such an experience to be learning language with these students, to take what is rightfully ours. And I've had other moments when children were just playing, it was their free time, and my mother picked up the drum to sing. I was busy preparing for the next lesson. And, it just hit me emotionally – here was the full circle. Go into the school – I've got young children, young, young minds. Our young generation is here, myself, the middle generation, we have our elder in the classroom, and it was a full circle. Here she was singing the song, and it was just beautiful. Next thing the children were sort of singing along and I thought, "what a connection!"

And I felt really emotional too, because I thought, we didn't grow up with grandparents or we weren't close to our grandparents because of alcoholism, and one of my grandparents died before I was born. It was just beautiful to see and to have that opportunity to experience that. When teachings happen, the elders are there, and they teach the children...I just thought we were so wrapped up in love at that time. It just felt so right and so beautiful.

Lisa goes on to compare her students' school experiences with her own in childhood:

If you do really take me back to childhood, and from what my comments said, it really does open my eyes too. No, I didn't feel like I had a voice in a big classroom with a bunch of non-native students. I don't think I felt like I measured up. I was labeled to be shy and a lot of times I was asked to answer something and I knew the answer but I chose not to answer. And I don't know – it's a fear of drawing attention to myself. I was different and I didn't want to think about it. I was different and unique, and yet, I was maybe different in not a good way. And that's how I felt and that's how I went to school everyday.

Lisa expresses a sense of regret of not learning more about her family and heritage.

We should have had more involvement with our families, with our land. I don't think we were in touch with where our land, where our history comes from. We didn't really know about our grandparents. I still to this day, from our parents, don't know about our grandparents, about how hardworking they were. And yet what we saw were two drunks, and that wasn't a positive image for me. Now I know. They know this land. This is their land and they spoke our language.

Although, as an adult, she has come to terms with the reasons her parents limited her involvement with the reserve and her extended family, she still reflects on her loss:

Maybe we were shielded from a lot, maybe because of the alcoholism, we were shielded, but by shielding us it shielded us from the good parts of who we are too. If you take away the alcoholism, I know now, that we come from a strong people and my family members were strong community members. And they may have had troubles with alcohol but they were good Secwepemc people that held our culture strong.

Participants with the most passionate responses to questions involving the role language played in developing their sense of identity generally had the least amount of exposure to their language and culture in their childhoods.

Respondents who communicated in the Secwepemc language in their childhoods expressed a strong sense of their heritage and a positive Secwepemc identity in their developmental years.

Relationship of Language to Cultural Knowledge

Everyone interviewed commented that the language represents a vital link to the cultural teachings and history of the Secwepemc. Jack, a language teacher, relates what the language means to him and the sense of fulfillment he gets from sharing his knowledge:

It got me alive. I feel that I have a purpose in life through the language. I feel that I need to share. Secwepmectsin is so fascinating a language that it must be kept alive. There is so much to learn by knowing the language.

He also speaks about the language and its connection to cultural knowledge.

Place names become alive when an elder takes you into the mountain. "Do you know that your great-grandfather hunted, trapped, fished in this valley? Spent the whole winters in the valley?"...The whole country becomes alive through the language.

I think we have a beautiful language and it deserves to be carried on.

Alex, a former Chief Atahm School student, also identifies the language as having an important connection to the Secwepemc culture:

Learning in the language and learning what happened all through history has definitely added to my sense of identity... I took Secwepemc courses, like that Secwepemc history. We took all those courses right from contact right up 'til now, so I know quite a bit about that. They don't teach like that in the public school so most don't know a lot about Secwepemc history.

Patrick, a classroom teacher, credits the language programs at Chief Atahm School with helping him to find the historical and cultural knowledge he was searching for. He explains the restlessness he felt before becoming involved with the school.

I think Chief Atahm School has really affected me in an incredibly positive way. One is by answering most of the questions about who I am and where I fit. I think it gives you a peace of mind or puts these things to rest and allows you to take on other projects, challenges. Now what I found before I left the public school system is, I had, for over 25 years, so many of these questions. They were still bothering me and I had no place to answer them. So what I was trying to do when I left the school district was to spend more time with my parents who would be my natural teachers to try to find out, try to answer some of these questions.

I think that if I didn't have the school for the last 10 years, and the whole wide range of experiences, I think that I wouldn't be as content and happy as I am now. I think I would still be bothered by the question of who are you, where did you live, why did you

live there, why did your parents live there. Your grandparents and people say, well, that was the old way. Well, what was the old way? And now I know many of these things. So I think the wandering around in the province and many different jobs teaching, always looking for an answer – whereas, I think one of the biggest things now is, I have no urge to move. I don't need to go to another place to try to find the answers to the question because they are all right here.

Jody, a classroom teacher, relates her enthusiasm in learning the language and her role at the school. When asked to describe what Chief Atahm School means to her she answered:

Chief Atahm School means to me language, language, language and more language. And it is a place where I can come to learn language, and it is a place where I have sent my children to learn language. And it is a place where if I could I would see all of my grandchildren here, but that is not possible. So I do have one here and I had another grandson that was here to learn the language. But Chief Atahm School means to me language, and being able to regain the language that is what it means to me.

Why is language important? Well, if you don't speak your language, well then, who are you? I think I have written papers on this – where you can't really prove who you are by blood or not really by background, somewhat. What is the difference between an English person and a French person, you know they look the same I think. But when they start speaking, then we know, okay, this is an English person and that is a French person. It makes you who you are, language. One of the huge differences between people is language. I imagine there is blood, I imagine there is background, but I think language is one of the defining factors. It makes a very strong statement about who you are.

Tina notes that many people in the community have yet to reconcile their ties to their language and culture.

I still think that the language hasn't filtered out to the community as much as it could have or should have. Like, I know some parents who come to language classes, but I still think there's that void or feeling. I don't know what it is, but getting people to that point where they're comfortable and really willing and wanting to speak in the home and in the community...I guess it has a lot to do with personal health and healing because I know when we were working on the research project with elders, a lot of times we just had to stop, because a lot of times it was so emotional for the elders because they were thinking back of when they, when the language was still strong, and there were a lot of elders who still spoke.

And I think it is a real healing for anyone, any Secwepemc, to learn their language and go back to their roots and language and culture. And I guess I just hope and pray that the language and the culture will reach more people I know, through the children. Hopefully, that more families will become involved because the burden can't be left on, the responsibility can't be left on just the children alone.

The responsibility of saving a dying language belongs to each and every community member. In order for intergenerational transmission of language to occur there needs to be fluent speakers and motivated learners. However, the burden needs to be shared amongst the generations and not be left to the children alone to shoulder.

Chapter Four Summary

Everyone interviewed expressed that knowing the Secwepemc language has had a positive impact on their lives. Whether their role at Chief Atahm School was of language teacher, staff, parent, or immersion student, they all indicated that knowledge of their language was key to developing a better sense of self and their heritage. The participants who were raised in English-dominant households were better able to make value comparisons between their lives with knowing the language, to their lives without knowing it. Therefore, for this group, learning the language at Chief Atahm School was often expressed as having been a powerful and sometimes life-changing experience. The younger students, although raised in English-dominant households, had from their earliest memories, been proficient in the Secwepemc language. They shared strong personal values in knowing the language, however, were unable to compare their experiences to someone who was raised monolingually. Fluent elder participants credited the language programs at Chief Atahm School with reviving their traditional status of teachers of the culture and with promoting feelings of self-worth through validating their traditional knowledge.

Although each participant's interview reflected a unique personal history, certain patterns were apparent amongst the generations. From the words of the residential school survivors there emerge stories of intense societal change resulting in language shift within their own families. In the language teachers/elders interviews they note the significant impact of the move from their early Secwepemc family life to the residential school. Haig-Brown records:

Of particular significance is the resultant clash of these cultural notions with the systemized, European-influenced life at the residential school. The rigid time schedules, the dearth of family contact even amongst siblings, and the constant supervision and direction accompanied by severe punishments for deviation were aspects of a way of life foreign to Shuswap children. (Haig-Brown, 1989, p. 43)

The residential school program involved a calculated plan to replace the traditional lifestyles of the children.

...Indian culture was never accepted by the school as a real, living culture. Rather it was seen as something archaic and undesirable, something to be annihilated. As the dominant culture gathered strength and it perceived that Indian culture was indeed dying, there was a noticeable relaxation in what was allowed at the school. (ibid, p. 53)

These repercussions of the residential school trauma were to be felt generations later. All of the elders in this study chose to raise their children in English only to

protect them from abuse and discrimination. Language shift is a term used to describe this process:

The speakers of a language find that their need to survive and prosper is better served by another language – so they learn that – and eventually find no residual use for their traditional language – so they cease to use it and do not teach it to their children. (Dalby,2002, p.219)

This language shift was further accelerated by the increased integration of their children into the schools and workplaces of the dominant culture.

The children of residential school survivors share the experience of growing up within a rapidly changing culture that focused on success in the outside world at the cost of losing cultural knowledge and the Secwepemc language. Students frequently found themselves in classrooms with white middle-class teachers who had little or no understanding of or experience with cross-cultural differences, or the skills to cross the cultural boundaries between them and the Native students. Curricula which focused on Euro-Canadian issues and which belittled or more frequently ignored Native roles in Canadian society did little to enhance Native students' self-esteem and desire for knowledge. (Haig-Brown, 1989, p. 120)

The 1994 interpretive study of residential schools by the Assembly of First Nations titled, "Breaking the Silence" discusses the negative impact of the breakdown of aboriginal cultures:

Cultural disconnection became more evident with each successive generation that passed through residential school. As already noted, individuals, families and community members found

themselves increasingly lost, without a sense of who they were or where they belonged. In short, the residential schools experience assisted in the oppression of First Nations. (pp.165-166)

The residual effects of the residential school experience are shown in the participant interviews.

The role Chief Atahm School has played in revitalizing the Secwepemc language in the community is recounted in the narratives. Interestingly, the school as an institution has taken on the role of facilitating intergenerational transmission. The school has motivated staff members and parents to use the Secwepemc language at home and in the workplace. In order for a language to survive it must be passed down to the younger generations.

Language transmission from one generation to another is the major factor in Aboriginal language survival and maintenance. Like other minority languages, the continual exposure to the more dominant languages, with the necessity to use them in everyday life is a powerful catalyst for the decline of Aboriginal language. (Norris, 2003, p.2)

The significant achievement of facilitating intergenerational transmission of the Secwepemc language is represented by the voices of former Chief Atahm School students. Within their stories we can witness the healing through their strong sense of pride in their heritage. Their words instill hope for the future of the Secwepemc language:

Chief Atahm School to me is an effort to not lose the Secwepemc language which is getting closer and closer to extinction as the last people, the fluent elders, are getting older and older. So young people need to learn the language so we don't lose it altogether...Without the language you're just basically brown white people, doing the same thing. If you don't have your culture or your language, that's what separates you, makes you different.
(Alex, former Chief Atahm School student)

And from Matt we hear:

The language has been such a significant part of my life for so long that it's become the norm for me. Chief Atahm School gives you perspective as to what exactly Secwepemc is and all that sort of stuff and its relation to identity and things of that nature...as a Secwepemc, as speaking my language, of being passed down the ideals of the people, as well as the cultural background.
(Matt, former Chief Atahm School student)

Through the words of these young Secwepemc men we can see a circle forming connecting the past to the present.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The results of this study have shown the impact of aboriginal language learning on the individual's sense of self. In this chapter I discuss implications of my study and ways in which the research may help other aboriginal groups to move forward on their language revitalization efforts. My goal was to provide a vehicle for participants of the Chief Atahm School program to share their stories of language healing. Through this process I was determined to better define the intrinsic benefits of heritage language learning. Although this study only highlights a small group of people within a single school setting, I feel that the findings can be applied to assist other aboriginal communities.

Personal Background

- **Early Family Life**

The participants of this study, with one exception, are from a homogeneous aboriginal group, the Secwepemc. One of the teachers is from a

neighbouring Interior Salishan tribe, Nlak'pamux (Thompson). All participants share many life experiences common to being an aboriginal person in British Columbia, but there were notable differences in childhood experiences amongst the generations. Within everyone's stories we see evidence of a significant language shift from the heritage language to English in their homes and community. For example, the eldest participant recorded in this study remembers growing up in a Secwepemc language-speaking household in his formative years, while the youngest parent participant could recall only that she visited her Lillooet relatives on occasion, and would sometimes hear a conversation in that language. All communication was conducted in English in her family life and education. The differences in early family life experiences influenced participant perspectives regarding the relationship of heritage language learning to establishing a positive identity.

- **Educational Experience**

The educational profiles of the participants showed a marked difference between the generations. All of the language teachers/elders completed all of their schooling at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. In contrast, only one of the parents interviewed had attended a portion of his schooling at the

residential school. All of the other teachers and parents had been schooled entirely at public institutions. The two former Chief Atahm School students interviewed had experienced a combination of band-operated schooling in the form of an immersion and bilingual school program, as well as schooling in public institutions. The respondents who had attended residential school expressed that the school environment was vastly different from the home environments. This difference made it difficult to adjust back into the Secwepemc culture and carried with it some language loss.

The participants who attended public schools shared their feelings of loss of identity. It was noted that the public school programs were designed to promote the values and language of the dominant culture and didn't share the teachings of the Secwepemc culture and language. Most respondents linked the lack of acknowledgement of their heritage in their early educational experiences to having later inspired them to become involved with the Chief Atahm School language program.

In contrast, the participants who had attended the Chief Atahm School immersion program had, from an early age, been taught by Secwepemc elders the culture and language of their people. Both of the students were clear in

explaining the positive impact this had on forming a positive self-image as a native person. They credited the school elders with promoting and developing their positive image of Secwepemc culture and traditions.

Language Knowledge

Within this thesis I have explored many factors involved with language loss and language shift amongst First Nations in Canada. The participants of my research study show evidence that this shift occurred amongst the Secwepemc people in British Columbia. The language fluency in the study group ranged from participants with beginning speaking abilities and limited comprehension, to elders with the Secwepemc language as their first language able to communicate in the language with ease.

It is important to clarify that the language fluency levels of the participants in my study do not represent that of a typical Secwepemc community. All of the research participants have been involved with either teaching or learning the Secwepemc language over several years and have established varying degrees of language fluency. This is generally not the case in other Secwepemc communities. It is important to demonstrate the extreme nature of language loss affecting Secwepemc people as a whole. To date, it has

been estimated that there are less than 300 speakers of the Secwepemc language. Amongst these few remaining speakers observations in communities show that far fewer are using the language within the home (Ignace, 2005,p.32). Post-residential schooled generations have been primarily raised in monolingual English speaking households.

The impact of Chief Atahm School on the language situation of the entire Secwepemc population is marginal when you consider the school's low enrollment. However, the impact on the school community has been immense in raising the awareness of the Secwepemc language and in establishing fluency levels in former non-speakers of the language. The added benefit has been the validating of the knowledge of the elders who have the Secwepemc language as their first language. Through involving them in language programs they have seen their status in the community rise. Their language fluency is now an employable skill and has been given a place of honour within the school community. In turn, the elders have noted that their use of language has increased at home and in the community and they have renewed enthusiasm for sharing their knowledge.

The success of Chief Atahm School can be seen through the parents and teachers who have, as adults, worked hard to learn their heritage language. All participants in this study have at least a working knowledge of the language and are able to communicate with others. This has been a result of the hard work and dedicated focus of the Chief Atahm School community.

Personal Value Placed on Knowing the Language

The foundation of my research is the participant interviews and the framework in which I have presented their stories. It is through the transcriptions of their own words that I have tried to convey their personal values regarding the Secwepemc language. Whether I have been successful or not in conveying the spirit of Chief Atahm School can only be answered by each person who reads this document. It is my hope that I have adequately expressed the experiences of the members of the Chief Atahm School community. Personally, I find it difficult to describe the value of learning my ancestral language. I know that any attempt of mine to describe what learning my language has meant to me wouldn't come close to describing the intensity of the emotion. My hope is that the excerpts from the participant interviews will

communicate the important role heritage language takes in establishing identity and a sense of personal self-worth.

All people interviewed indicated that their knowledge of the language and culture has positively enhanced their social and emotional welfare. Many examples of life-changing experiences were presented in their stories. Those who communicated the greatest impact from their involvement at Chief Atahm School were the people who had the least exposure and involvement with the language as children. They were able to make a value comparison between their lives prior to their Chief Atahm School involvement to the present. The former Chief Atahm School students were unable to visualize a life without the language and, although were appreciative of their skill, did not see it as influencing a dramatic change in their personal growth.

The language teachers/elders all had fond memories of the language and were delighted to be involved with passing the language down to future generations. They indicated that the value of knowing their language was strongly bound to memories of the past and to Secwepemc cultural knowledge. All participants defined the personal value of the language as having forged an important link to their cultural history and identity.

Relationship of Language to Culture

A statement often repeated at aboriginal language meetings is "language is culture". But what exactly does this statement mean? As a student of the Secwepemc language I am only beginning to understand the meaning of that statement. All languages are unique firstly because they sound different. It's also probably safe to say that each language has a unique vocabulary and structure and each has a unique way to categorize and describe the world. What is harder to define is the way that each language communicates expressions, thoughts, and feelings. For example, my mother has been trying to tell me for years that the Secwepemc language is a whole body experience. She describes the language as a "feeling, seeing, and a doing" language. When something is said in the Secwepemc language it creates a visceral response, unlike English, which she says can be so "wishy-washy". The first time I really understood this came as a complete surprise to me. I had never experienced a full body language experience before, and I'll have to admit I rather enjoyed it. In language class one day we were listening to an elder tell a traditional story. Although my language is at a beginner's stage, I was really intent on understanding it. Sometime during the story I became an active participant. I felt like I was really there, that I was transported into the world of the story.

Since that experience I often see or taste, smell, or feel Secwepemc words. I now know what my mother means (mothers are always right).

This experience has taught me that languages do represent different worldviews and that the ways in which they communicate life experience can vary greatly from one culture to the next. That is one of the reasons that you often hear people from another language say that a joke doesn't translate well into English. If language is the tool used by cultures to express their unique worldviews, then certainly it can be said that the two are interconnected.

The ability of the elders in this study to use the Secwepemc language to teach their cultural knowledge was expressed as being the most gratifying part of their jobs. Most participants, especially the former students, felt that their best memories of Chief Atahm School were the cultural trips out onto the land. The world the Secwepemc language conveys are the mountains, rivers, lakes, and the land of the people. Indeed, the majority of Secwepemc words are vocabulary relating to the natural world. Chief Atahm School has provided a place for the cultural teachings to continue and the language is the vehicle through which this is communicated.

Conclusion

I believe that the Secwepemc language will survive. I believe that the traditional knowledge of the Secwepemc is a valuable resource to all humans. The loss of the world's indigenous languages is a problem shared by us all. Indigenous languages represent thousands of years of accumulated knowledge of the plants, medicines, resources, and wildlife within traditional territories. The loss of these languages would be equivalent to a worldwide disaster.

When it comes to saving a language, every effort helps, even initiatives that start in small, rural communities. The language immersion program of Chief Atahm School is a testament that language shift can be reversed. The members of the school community have shown within their stories that their struggles have been a labour of love. Not only have they begun to repair the intergenerational transmission of language, but they have also benefited with personal growth and healing.

I have hoped to convey a spirit of hope for aboriginal language revitalization in Canada. The participant stories I have shared with you are stories that many other people can relate to. There is nothing especially unique about the staff, parents, elders, and students at Chief Atahm School, nor has

there been any secret ingredient used to help make the program work. The results of the immersion program came about through a group of people sharing a common vision and who've kept focus on that singular vision.

The rewards of establishing an immersion program have been immense. Initially, the idea was to focus only on repairing the link between the fluent speakers and the very young to help re-establish intergenerational transmission of our language and culture in our community. Teaching the language to the generation of parents who were never taught the language in childhood was not the first priority. The parents and teachers were given the role of supporters and were to learn the language in order to help support the children in the program. They never expected to personally benefit from their involvement.

The stories from the parents and the teachers demonstrate a connection between establishing a strong identity and knowing your heritage language. The people in the study who learned the Secwepemc language as adults became the most passionate supporters of language learning. They perceived that their lives were positively affected by the learning of their language. I entered into this study because I share that indescribable sense of holiness from learning my

language. I believe in the healing power of the Secwepemc language and may it continue to bless us "welme7 yews, welme7 yews" (forever and forever).

Recommendations

There is great potential for an aboriginal language revolution. All it takes is changing our negative thought patterns. "We can do it" and "we will do it" are phrases we need to use to help break down the obstacles we see in front of us. I have shared some stories from Chief Atahm School that describe the benefits to language learning. Some of the positive benefits associated with language learning are:

- the establishment of intergenerational interaction
- the development of a positive sense of identity and belongingness
- an increased language fluency
- personal job satisfaction
- respect from community and peers
- learning of cultural knowledge and skills
- healing of past trauma and hurts

The group of elders interviewed shared some of the benefits they felt through their involvement at Chief Atahm School:

- a validation of their knowledge and skills
- an increased use of the Secwepemc language

- the healing of past traumas and hurt
- a renewed role in teaching young people
- a job providing economic stability
- an increased respect in the community
- a return to the traditional role of elder

Although most participants noted that Chief Atahm School still has a long way to go in achieving its goals, they all believed that there have been immense benefits to their involvement to date. It takes sustained energy to maintain an immersion language program. The enthusiasm of a few dedicated individuals can only be sustained through the involvement of new members who will share the dream, as well as the workload.

With the results of this study I hope to support the argument for the teaching of heritage languages. Perhaps this paper will assist someone in answering the question, "What good is knowing your language in modern day?" I think it would be great if more research could be done on the school's program. It would be interesting to compare the experiences of the participants in this study to that of the younger students at Chief Atahm School.

Judging by the comments of the two former students, one of the goals of the school to foster a sense of pride in the Secwepemc heritage, has been achieved. By teaching children about who they are, the school is taking a

preventative approach to future self-destructive behaviours that may come as a result of having a negative sense of identity.

Coyote Tracks

Coyote's journey never ends. He will always find obstacles and other forms of mischief in his path. One thing we can rely on is that he never truly dies.

However, Coyote always needs a helper to jump over him three times to revive him. For our languages to survive they need to find their helpers too. Remember though, that the role of helper is not without its rewards.

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Kathryn Michel

APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM ADAMS LAKE BAND

P.O. BOX 588
CHASE, BC V0E 1M0
PHONE 679-8841
FAX 679-8813

January 13, 2005

Kathryn A. Michel
c/o Chief Atahm School
Box 588
Chase, BC
V0E 1M0

Re: Master's Thesis in Education

Dear Kathryn:

Thank you for your letter of January 10, 2005, informing the Council of your plans to complete your master's thesis in education by writing a paper titled "You Can't Kill Coyote: Stories of Language Healing from Chief Atahm School Secwepemc Language Immersion Program".

On behalf of Council, I would like to inform you that Council fully supports your research and is willing to assist in any way to enable you to complete the required interviews within the community and else where.

The Adams Lake Indian Band Council will notify our employees and as many other people of your research and your need to complete interviews with staff and community members.

Sincerely,

Chief Ronnie Jules

RJ/ba

cc: Council, Adams Lake Indian Band

APPENDIX 2: ADAMS LAKE BAND COUNCIL RESOLUTION

ADAMS LAKE INDIAN BAND

PO Box 588
 Chase, BC V0E 1M0
 Phone: (250) 679-8841
 Fax: (250) 679-8813

BAND COUNCIL RESOLUTION

Chronological No
2003/04 - 102
Quorum of
4

The Council of the:	ADAMS LAKE INDIAN BAND
District:	B.C. REGION - AREA NORTH
Province:	BRITISH COLUMBIA
Place:	CHASE, B.C.

Day: 11 Month: January Year: 2005

RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE ADAMS LAKE BAND
(hereinafter, called the "Council")

WHEREAS the Chief and Council of the Adams Lake Indian Band fully supports ALIB member Kathryn Michel with the completion of her master's thesis in Education through Simon Fraser University

WHEREAS the ALIB Council supports Kathryn Michel to complete research and conduct of interviews on the Adams Lake Indian Band.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the ALIB Council supports Kathryn Michel with research to complete her master's thesis paper titled "You Can't Kill Coyote: Stories of Language Healing from Chief Atahm School Secwepemc Language Immersion Program".

APPENDIX 3: LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Dear Name,

Subject: Kathryn Michel's Masters Thesis

I am working on a masters of arts in education thesis through Simon Fraser University. At this time I am hoping to interview people who are, or have been involved, in the Chief Atahm School language programs. I would appreciate your participation in my study. I wish to audio record an oral interview with you about your experiences at Chief Atahm School. I am enclosing my research plan for my thesis.

If you agree to participate, please contact me at your earliest convenience so that we may arrange an interview time and location. I can be reached at the school, by cell phone (372-4875), or at home (679-3789).

Kukstsemc,

Kathryn Michel

SFU Masters of Arts in Education student

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Oral Interview Questions to be recorded on audiocassette and transcribed.

Part One: Personal information

1. What is your name, age, and birthplace.
2. How many are in your immediate family?
3. Describe your family and where you grew up.
4. What is your educational background?
5. What is your ethnic heritage?

Part Two: Involvement with language revitalization and with Chief Atahm School.

1. Describe your level of fluency in the Secwepemc language?
2. (if applicable) When and how did you learn to speak the language?
3. Prior to the opening of Chief Atahm School, describe your level of use of the Secwepemc language.
4. Were you involved with any language revitalization efforts prior to the school opening? If yes, describe.
5. When and how did you first become involved with Chief Atahm School?
6. Describe the nature of your involvement at Chief Atahm School.
7. (for employees) Where were you employed prior to working at Chief Atahm School?

Part Three: Personal Growth

1. Has your involvement with the language programs at Chief Atahm School influenced you personally?
2. Has your involvement with the language programs at Chief Atahm School influenced your family life?

3. Are there any noticeable changes in your community since the opening of Chief Atahm School?
4. Has your involvement with the language programs at Chief Atahm School influenced any changes in your sense of identity?
5. Describe what Chief Atahm School means to you.
6. Would you recommend the program to someone? Why or why not?
7. If Chief Atahm School was never established and you were never involved in any other language program, what do you think your life would be like today? Would there be a difference in your personal growth?
8. What are your best experiences of Chief Atahm School?
9. What do you feel are Chief Atahm School's weaknesses?
10. Is there anything you wish to add?