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Christine Schreyer
PhD Candidate
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB

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Introduction

Within Canada, land claims have been at the forefront of political and economic considerations for Aboriginal¹ peoples for the past thirty years². In my research, I argue, therefore, that any discussion of Aboriginal language planning in Canada would be unproductive if land claims are not taken into account. Daveluy has written that for Canada's Aboriginal peoples "language issues were for a long time...subordinated to land and jurisdictional claims" (2004: 84); and provides examples of the language policies in Northern Quebec as a counterexample to this trend. In my research with two Canadian First Nations, I have also found that language issues and land issues are often merged together. The two communities that I have collaborated with are the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, located in Atlin, British Columbia, and the Loon River Cree First Nation, located in Loon Lake, Alberta. When approached as possible research partners, both communities initiated and actively participated in collaborative language maintenance and revitalization projects for their communities, and this illustrates that their native languages are priorities for them. Also, each of the communities have experience negotiating for their rights to their traditional lands. My hypothesis, then, was that active community participation in land issues leads to an awareness of other issues, particularly language use. My research has supported this hypothesis, and a summary of my findings will be discussed in the following pages.

Taku River Tlingit First Nation Background

The Taku River Tlingit First Nation is located in Atlin, British Columbia. They have a population of 374 people, 82 of whom live on reserve (INAC, 2008). The Taku River Tlingit First Nation has never surrendered their Aboriginal Title to the land because the federal and provincial governments have never conducted treaty negotiations in their traditional territory. This means that the land claim they are negotiating falls under the category of a comprehensive claim. Comprehensive claims are defined as those claims that "arise in areas of Canada where Aboriginal land rights have not been dealt with by past treaties or through other legal means" (INAC, 2008). These usually take longer to negotiate because they involve many different factors (such as self-governance, education, health services, and land and resource management) and larger land areas than in a specific claim defined as "claims that deal with past grievances of First Nations related to Canada's obligations under historic treaties or they way it managed First

¹ The term Aboriginal (as is the practice in Canada) is inclusive of all of the indigenous peoples of Canada including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. The term Indigenous, when it is used, will refer to those peoples who are original inhabitants of a particular land. The term First Nation is inclusive of groups previously known as Indians, and most individuals identify themselves as belonging to a specific First Nation.

² In 1973, the *Calder* decision in which three of the seven Supreme Court judges declared that the Nisga'a retained Aboriginal Title to the land prompted the Canadian Federal Government to begin land claims negotiations with Aboriginal Peoples across Canada.

Nations' funds or other assets" (INAC, 2008). Despite the fact that the Taku River Tlingit have not signed a treaty, they do have some reserve lands already allocated to them under the McKenna-McBride Commission of 1915.

In British Columbia, land claims are settled through the British Columbia Treaty Commission in a six stage negotiation process³. The Taku River Tlingit First Nation has reached stage four of the treaty process, which is the negotiation of an agreement in principle. Beginning in 1984, the Taku River First Nation started working on collecting information that would support their land claim and negotiations with the government. However, the negotiations between the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the federal and provincial governments came to a stand still due to the lack of government support for the community during their court case against Redfern Resources Ltd. In this court case, the Taku River Tlingit First Nation fought for stewardship over their traditional lands in order to allow for the continuance of their way of life.⁴ Redfern Resources wanted to build a mining road through their territory, which, if constructed, would have caused a huge impact on an otherwise undeveloped large portion of their territory and would have disrupted their traditional way of life.⁵ In 1999, the Taku River Tlingit began working with the Round River Organization, a conservation group, in order to develop a sustainable land plan, also known as the Conservation Area Design, to further strengthen their argument for stewardship over their land. They published these documents (the Conservation Area Design and the Vision and Management Document) in 2003. Therefore, as a result of these long battles with government and economic agencies the Taku River Tlingit First Nation has developed a vast Heritage Archive, which includes a variety of documents such as photographs, historical documents, early ethnographies of the region, and extensive interviews with Elders and other community members (some of which have yet to be transcribed). People are constantly transcribing interviews within the band office to further expand the archive, and my research will also be on file there when it is complete.

Since the court case in 2004, and the development of what is known as British Columbia's "new relationship"⁶ with Aboriginal Peoples, the Taku River Tlingit have been involved in government to government negotiations on a joint land use planning agreement for the Atlin-Taku area, and the community ratified the framework agreement in March of 2008.⁷ This land use plan builds on their Vision and Management document, which was entitled *Hà t_tátgi hà khustiyxh* - Our Land is Our Future (2003), and is occurring outside of the land claims process. The community sees this as beneficial to their goals of stewardship and self-governance. As Sandra Jack, current Spokesperson, told me in our interview, "we all know that land claims are a bit of a sellout to First Nations people and it's a terrible insult to our ancestors for us to say, 'okay we'll take these little pieces of reserve land, all over the place and that will be fine' ". In comparison to land claims, the Atlin-Taku Framework agreement takes into account 5.5 million hectares of land, which makes up Taku River's traditional territory.

³ For more information see: <http://www.bctreaty.net>

⁴ For more information on the court case see: *Taku River Tlingit First Nation v. British Columbia (Project Assessment Director)*, [2004] 3 S.C.R. 550, 2004 SCC 74

⁵ For more information see: Staples, Lindsay (1996) *Determining the Impact of the Tulsequah Chief Mine Project on the Traditional Land Use of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation: Addendum on Impacts*. A Report Prepared For: Environmental Assessment Office, Province of British Columbia. North/West Resources Consulting Group: Whitehorse, Yukon.

⁶ The province of British Columbia states that the "new relationship" involves "the provincial government and B.C. First Nations' organizations...working together to develop a New Relationship founded on respect, recognition, and reconciliation of Aboriginal Rights and Title". For more information on the "new relationship" see: <http://www.em.gov.bc.ca/subwebs/AboriginalAffairs/New-Relationship.htm>

⁷ For more information see: http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/smithers/atlin_taku/index.html#background

Loon River Cree First Nation Background

The Loon River Cree First Nation is located at Loon Lake, Alberta. The community has a population of 473 individuals, 377 of whom live on reserve (INAC, 2008). Previously known as one of the “isolated communities” of northern Alberta the Loon River Cree First Nation’s traditional territory is located within the Treaty 8 area of Alberta, approximately 175 kilometres north of Lesser Slave Lake in north-central Alberta. Treaty 8 was originally signed in 1899; however, members of Loon River Cree First Nation did not sign the Treaty, and were not recognized as a band until 1991 (see Federal Government of Canada, 1991). The most commonly referenced reason behind the Loon River Cree First Nation's absence from the signing of Treaty 8 is that the Treaty commissioners traveled by major rivers, and the Loon River Cree were missed because they lived “in the bush” between the rivers (J. Noskey, interview, 2007).

The Loon River Cree did not receive reserve lands until the community signed an addendum to Treaty 8 in 1999⁸, which is known as a specific land claim. Federry states that in 2001 there were a total of 1071 specific land claims submitted to the government; and of this 1071 only 251 have been resolved and the number that is submitted is increasing every year (as quoted in McNab, 1992).⁹ Prior to the recognition of the community members as status Indians, they were often believed to be Métis. For example, in *The Métis and the Land in Alberta: Land Claims Research Project 1979-1980*, published by the Métis Association of Alberta the community profile for Loon Lake states, “Loon Lake is a predominantly Métis community ... as in the other communities we visited, trapping and hunting are actively pursued” (Sawchuk and Grey, 1980: 290). The fact that the Loon River Cree were previously known as “isolated” is particularly ironic due to the fact that it is their current loss of isolation due to their location in Alberta’s heart of oil and gas development that has led to the recent development of language planning within the community.

Language Planning and Connection to the Land amongst the Taku River Tlingit and Loon River Cree First Nations

During my research with the Taku River Tlingit and the Loon River Cree, I volunteered on collaborative language projects. In Atlin, I helped to create a Tlingit language board game entitled “*Haa shagóon itx yaa ntoo.aat*” (Traveling Our Ancestors’ Paths) and in Loon Lake, I worked on developing Cree language storybooks entitled “*Na mokatch poni áchimon*” (I will never quit telling stories). Both of these projects connect land use and language use and my experiences in collaborating on these projects have allowed me access to the “everyday language use” (Patrick, 2005) that are essential to understanding the micro-language planning in each community (see Liddicoat and Baldauf, 2008). Language planning is connected to language ideology or “self-evident ideas and objectives a group holds concerning roles of language in the social experience of members as they contribute to the expression of the group” (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994: 57). Language ideology, then, can be seen to be an important feature of social identity as it is through language that social facts are constructed and shared within a community (Searle, 1995).

⁸ An addendum means that Loon River is a part of Treaty 8, only belatedly, and they are no different from the other communities that signed in 1899.

⁹ It is difficult to determine exactly how many specific claims are currently filed, although Indian and Northern Affairs Canada states that 460 have been concluded as of March 31st, 2006 (http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/clm/asc_e.html).

Language ideologies are often represented in the discourse the community utilizes to perform or share their identity with outsiders. As Schieffelin and Doucet write, “language ideologies are likely places to find images of ‘self/other’, ‘us/them’...” (1994: 177). The Taku River Tlingit and the Loon River Cree perform their social identities based on this us/them distinction, which is based on their connection to their traditional territories. According to Cattell and Climo, community identity is never static because of the constant forces both from within the community and from the outside world that affect every individual within a community (Cattell and Climo, 2002). Place, a socially constructed phenomenon, must be articulated from *within* a community. As Basso notes, “If place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of *doing* human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We *are*, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine” (Basso, 1996: 7, italics in the original). Both the Taku River Tlingit and the Loon River Cree invoke the past and their connection to the land in their constructions of their identity. The Loon River Cree social identity is based on their historical relationship to the land as “status Indians” as opposed to Métis peoples. This is in contrast to the Taku River Tlingit, who construct their identity based on their historical connection to the land from “time-immemorial”. My research explores how each community has utilized these discourses of connection to the land in their language planning, and how the rhetoric they use locally is different than Canadian national rhetoric on Aboriginal language planning.

Aboriginal Languages Task Force

In June of 2005, the Aboriginal Languages Task Force released their report entitled *Towards a New Beginning: A foundational report for a strategy to revitalize First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Languages and Cultures* (2005). The report explains that:

In December 2002, the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that Canada would create a centre with a budget of \$160 million over ten years to help preserve, revitalize and promote Aboriginal Languages and Cultures (2005: i).

Ten Task Force Members were chosen and they represented the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the Métis National Council¹⁰. The report outlines “a national strategy to preserve, revitalize, and promote First Nation, Inuit, and Métis languages and cultures” (2005: 1), and also emphasizes the relationship Aboriginal languages have to the land from which they originated. The cover page of the executive summary of the report displays a child’s drawing of people surrounding a rising sun amidst an expanse of green land and blue sky. The words within the drawing state, “As the sun rises...so should our languages” (Aboriginal Languages Task Force, 2005: cover). The connection between land and language can be seen here as well as within the body of the report which states:

“The land” is more than the physical landscape; it involves the creatures and plants, as well as the people’s historical and spiritual relationship to their territories. First Nation, Inuit, and Métis languages show that the people are not separate from the land. They have a responsibility to protect it and to preserve the sacred and traditional knowledge associated with it (Aboriginal Languages Task Force, 2005: ii).

¹⁰ These are the national bodies that represent these communities within Canada.

For the Task Force it is “the oral histories, the songs and the dances that speak of the First Nation, Inuit and Métis connection with this land” (Aboriginal Languages Task Force, 2005: viii). However, despite the fact that the language planning strategies promoted in the Aboriginal Languages Task Force (2005) stress the importance of “bottom-up language planning [as] crucial to the success of a national language strategy” (2005:81), the themes of rhetoric used within this report are not completely aligned with the themes of rhetoric and strategies that the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the Loon River Cree First Nation employ locally.

Within the Aboriginal Languages Task Force, as I have described above, there is a strong connection outlined between Aboriginal languages and the land. Within the Task Force Report the subheading for Part VII: A National Language Organization states:

What is done to the land is done to the people, and what is done to the people is done to the land. The Creator gave us all that we need: the forest, the people, the animals; all that grows; and most important the language – so it is imperative that we take care of it (2005: 98).

This sentiment echoes that of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation whose constitution states: “It is from which we came that connects all life. Our land is our lifeblood. Our land looks after us and we look after our land. Anything that happens to Tlingit land affects us and our culture” (TRTFN, 1993). The Taku River Tlingit First Nation have utilized these statements to perform their social identity and language ideology, and these words are also located on a sign that marks the border of their traditional territory as well as in land planning documents, and even on t-shirts from the Lands and Resources department. This relationship between land and language is also implicit in the community used phrase *Ha Tlatki Ha Kustiyi* (Our Land – Our Way of Life). The Loon River Cree First Nation has also implicitly employed this ideology of connection between language and land, and this can be seen in the mandate for the community’s Consultation Unit, which interacts with government and industry on land related issues. Their policy states one of their goals as “protect[ing] the *culture, language* and lifestyle of the LRFN community and membership” (LRCFN Consultation Unit, Policies and Procedures, 2006, emphasis added). The relationship between land and language is one that both national and local strategies share, and land claims, then, can be seen to be relevant to discussions on language planning.

The Aboriginal Languages Task Force report also connects this loss of control over lands to language endangerment. It states:

Languages have been described as being akin to the miner’s canary: where languages are in danger, it is a sign of environmental distress. Certainly, this is true for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis languages. Language loss in Canada closely parallels the weakening of the vital connection of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people to their homelands as a result of alienation of their lands or resource development, such as hydroelectric dams, mining, and forestry (2005: 72).

The first recommendation that the Aboriginal Languages Task Force makes is labeled “the link between languages and the land”, and argues for “meaningful participation in stewardship, management, co-management or co-jurisdiction arrangements” (2005: 73). Stewardship over lands and resources is a concept that both communities are applying locally via land planning initiatives. The Aboriginal Languages Task Force report addresses *stewardship over languages* in their comments on the Canadian Minister of Heritage’s commitment to Aboriginal Languages

from 2002. The report states, “At that time, it was already clear, that to survive and prosper the languages and cultures of Canada’s First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples must be under their *stewardship* and control and receiving their local community direction” (2005: 13, emphasis added). However, I believe that the report does not take this argument far enough to fully represent the local realities of the communities. Both the Taku River Tlingit and the Loon River Cree, through the land stewardship policies they have put in place, have incorporated language as just one of the resources that are a part of the land, although only the Taku River Tlingit First Nation labels their policies as stewardship explicitly. Ruiz defines orientations in language planning as “a complex of dispositions toward...languages and their role in society. These dispositions may be largely unconscious...” (Ruiz, 1984: 16), but it is possible to uncover them in language “policies and proposals which already exist” (Ruiz, 1984: 16). Both communities have also incorporated language planning into their land stewardship models and the collaborative language curriculum projects I helped to develop with both communities incorporate knowledge of the land and stewardship practices into language learning and are an extension of this language planning ideology.

Within the Aboriginal Languages Task Force another focus has been on the concept of nationhood. One section title includes the phrase “Our Languages and Cultures: Our Nationhood”, and here it is written:

First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples were nations in the original and truest sense of the term – groups of people linked by common bonds of language, culture, ethnicity, and a collective desire to maintain their distinctiveness and political autonomy (2005: 26).

The Task Force also asserts that, “Canada’s departure from this understanding [of Aboriginal peoples as nations] ...has contributed to language loss” (2005: ii). However, amongst both the Taku River Tlingit and the Loon River Cree, ideas of nationhood do not surface in language planning but rather in negotiations for control over land. As mentioned previously, language planning is a part of land planning in these communities. In fact, Taku River and Loon River are utilizing “genres of nation-hood” (Dinwoodie, 1998) such as auto-biography and declarations, and I argue in my research that the use of these forms of community discourse are performatives of sovereignty (Sullivan, 2006, following Austin’s (1962) notion of performance) in order to assert their stewardship of the land and the languages that are found there. Taku River and Loon River have also utilized other nation-building devices (such as the creation of monuments, symbolic expressions of identity, and standardized orthographies) and these have had an impact on the community and the linguistic differentiation that each of the communities is asserting (see Irvine and Gal, 2000). For them, language is an implicit part of the land, and this connection to their territory as stewards of the land and resources is where each community’s focus has been in terms of their identities as nations.

The Aboriginal Languages Task Force also uses the concept of language rights within their report, which states:

It is our view that while language is a collective right, it is equally a fundamental human right, as well as an individual right. The minority language right protection in section 25 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is a precedent for recognizing that language rights attach to individuals (Aboriginal Languages Task Force, 2005: 99).

The Aboriginal Languages Task Force outlines the International Conventions on language rights, human rights, indigenous rights, and many more in their Appendix F (2005). The rhetoric of nationhood and language rights go hand and hand within the Aboriginal Languages Task Force report despite the fact that local communities, such as the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the Loon River Cree First Nation, do not use these models within their language planning. Whiteley writes that “in the world system, an ideology of linguistic rights is decidedly logocentric and dependent on nation-state ideas of language and community” (2003: 717) and within the Aboriginal Languages Task Force the members of the committee used this western ideology of nationhood and language rights to formulate their strategy of language planning. The Taku River Tlingit and the Loon River Cree do not use this ideology and I will outline here my opinions on why these communities have chosen not to do so below.

Often in Western culture we define rights as something we *possess*, in fact, according to Wright, “*Possessing* its own language helps define a group” (2004: 45, emphasis added). Errington, in his article entitled “Getting Language Rights: The Rhetorics of Language Endangerment and Loss” (2003), describes this trend of asserting language rights in order to reverse language shift. He states that this strategy:

...presupposes languages to be *possessions* of speakers, rather than natural phenomena. Under this profile, endangered languages’ values are linked to speakers’ shared biographies and collective identities: They are not natural conditions to be maintained but, rather, rights to be recognized by sources of political authority (Errington, 2003: 727, emphasis added).

Whiteley also argues that language rights discourse separates language as a thing, distinct from self and community, which takes on the form of a possession. He writes, “language rights discourse is ...associated with an idea of property rights (as defined in Western law) and the capitalist economy as it is with a discourse of human rights” (2003: 713). I find this notion of languages as possessions to be in contradiction to the Taku River Tlingit’s and the Loon River Cree’s views of their languages. For these communities, their languages *are* natural conditions that need to be maintained, and this is how the communities have situated their languages in terms of language planning. Errington describes this view of languages as natural elements in a particular environment (otherwise known as eco-linguistics) as another way in which activists have used rhetoric to promote awareness of endangered languages (2003). However, in the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the Loon River Cree First Nation this is an essential component of their language ideologies and orientations in language planning (Ruiz, 1984) as it is through their actions and community policies that language planning and land planning have become integrated.

The Taku River Tlingit and the Loon River Cree see their languages as a resource that is a part of their lands, which they will continue to maintain as stewards of their lands. It can not be a *possession* as they do not *possess* the land. The land is maintained collectively through community decisions and is an essential element to the socially constructed community identities that they both have developed as a response to outsider’s claims to their traditional territories.

Differences do exist between Cree and Tlingit conceptions of property and land ownership. For instance, within Tlingit culture, clans often maintain “strong ‘sentimental ties’ to the land, which in some ways resembled the relation of ownership” (Nadasdy, 2003: 238). As Catherine McClellan noted during her fieldwork in the Southern Yukon between 1948 and 1951,

“moiety or sib members held their common area in a kind of trusteeship, and developed strong emotional feelings about their stewardship” (McClellan, 1975: 483-84). However, this communal maintenance of lands based on clan or moiety does not occur in Cree culture, although many anthropologists have debated about whether or not Cree concepts of family hunting territory are equivalent to a form of property ownership.¹¹

The concept of stewardship in each community also reflects the ideology that they do not own the land, but rather those who have a moral responsibility to protect it. The obligation hunters have to look after the land can also be seen in Nadasdy’s work with the Kluane First Nation, located in the southern Yukon. Nadasdy writes:

One does not possess a right to kill animals merely because one was born to First Nations parents; rather animals are a gift. They give themselves to hunters when and if the hunters prove themselves worthy, and with this gift come heavy obligations and responsibilities. If hunters do not live up to these responsibilities, then the animals will stop giving to hunters. The notion of rights has no place in this relationship (Nadasdy, 2003:245).

Patrick has examined the differences between Aboriginal and Treaty rights and language rights discourse of French speaking Canadians in more detail, and states that the differences are the result of “social, cultural, and economic asymmetries” (2005: 376). The Aboriginal Languages Task Force has used both the rhetoric of nation-hood and language rights within their report, and neither of these can be seen in the community internal rhetoric of either the Taku River Tlingit First Nation or the Loon River Cree First Nation as it is contrary to their language ideologies. It should be explicitly noted though that the use of nationhood and language rights rhetoric was strategic for the Task Force, as they were directing their strategies to the Canadian Federal government and wanted to be seen as a nation on equal terms with Canada. Finally, in contrast, the Taku River Tlingit and the Loon River Cree First Nations do not seek this recognition as nations in their language planning, but rather in their land planning, a direct result of their involvement in the land claims process.

Since July of 2008, when I finished my fieldwork, I have been in the process of writing my dissertation. I have presented the preliminary results of this work at the Northwest Anthropological Conference in Victoria, and the Canadian Anthropology Society’s conference in Ottawa. Articles on this research have also been published in *Anthropologie et Sociétés* (Schreyer and Gordon, 2007) and *Current Issues in Language Planning* (Schreyer, 2008). I plan to defend my dissertation in early 2009.

I would like to sincerely thank the Salisbury Selection committee from 2007 and the CASCA executive for awarding me the Richard F. Salisbury Award. The funding from this award has enabled me to return to the community of Loon River Cree First Nation in order to complete my fieldwork, and it is my hope that my research has lived up to the legacy of such an accomplished and renowned scholar as Richard Salisbury.

¹¹ It should be noted that the concept of property is a complex topic (see Nadasdy, 2003), and Tlingit and Cree communities have unique cultural conceptions of property and ownership. For information on Cree hunting territory ownership see: Speck, 1915; Leacock, 1945; Morantz, 1986; Scott, 1988; Flannery, 1995. For information on Tlingit clan territory ownership see: Goldschmidt and Haas, 1946; McClellan, 1975, and Thornton, 2003.

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http://www.em.gov.bc.ca/subwebs/AboriginalAffairs/New_Relationship.htm

First Nations Profiles = http://sdiprod2.inac.gc.ca/FNProfiles/FNProfiles_home.htm

INAC on Land Claims = <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/al/ldc/index-eng.asp>

Taku River Tlingit First Nation v. British Columbia (Project Assessment Director), [2004] 3 S.C.R. 550, 2004 SCC 74 =
<http://csc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/2004/2004scc74/2004scc74.html>

Taku River Tlingit Framework Agreement =
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Jack, Sandra (2006) Interview with Christine Schreyer. Atlin, BC, September 8th, 2006.

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