CMNS 428 – Directed Study (4)
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July 27, 2016
Final Draft

Media and Minority Languages

In the Canadian North:

How Media Systems and Related Policies Serve Linguistic Preservation in Remote Northern Indigenous Communities

Word Count: 8,350

Introduction

Canadian history has not been kind to the nation's Indigenous languages, from the time of European settlement in the mid-1700s to the present day. The once-thriving 70 unique languages that sculpted the identity of early Aboriginal Canada have since faded to an uncertain shadow of what they were. As of the 2011 Canadian Census, 60 Aboriginal languages remain, with only three — Cree, Inuktitut, and Ojibway — accounting for two-thirds of the Aboriginal speaking population while labeled as the languages most likely to survive significantly into the future (StatsCan, 2011). The rest (Gwich'in, Tlingit, and Slavey, to name a few) have been classified as endangered to varying degrees — many of which have been reduced to mere hundreds of Indigenous speakers clustered in the isolated, remote communities that dot the Canadian North. Such prospects for complete language loss, particularly within Arctic villages, are a devastating reality, one that's induced by a variety of social and political influences that are propelled by overarching media climates in the North.

This paper will explore the extent to which Canada's northern Aboriginal languages are endangered, communicate the causes and impacts of this language loss, explain why language preservation is important, and focus prominently on the current Canadian media systems in the North, and their related communications policies that serve the minority linguistic preservation needed to keep Canada culturally diverse. It will then conclude with some suggestions on media policy measures, rooted in the responsibilities of an official Aboriginal Languages Act, one that must immediately be implemented by the federal government, in order to ensure that these endangered Indigenous languages can survive indefinitely.

Language, Culture, and the Factors of Northern Language Decay

George Steiner eloquently proclaimed, in his 1967 text *Language and Silence*, "language is the defining mystery of man" in which "identity and historical presence are uniquely explicit" (p. 16-17). Indeed, language is a sacred building block of one's identity, the crux of one's culture, the definition of the self. One could perceive the words "language" and "culture" as interchangeable (Kirkness, 1998, p. 93), and when a language is lost, so are a culture's traditions, customs, wisdom and unique ways of appreciating a specific human reality (Fishman, 1996, p. 81). In a globalized village of rapidly expanding technology, the cultural, geographic and societal forces that plague the indigenous communities of the world have exploited themselves to the detriment of thousands of unique linguistic identities. In fact, language is being destroyed more quickly than ever before. It's estimated that only 10 percent of the world's languages will have survived by the end of the next 100 years (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 4); a rate far faster than the death of biodiversity, which seems to worry the public more so (p. 4). Linguicide is an unfortunate global phenomenon, perpetuated primarily by hegemonic media environments, active repression, and weak educational systems (p. 4).

In Canada, it is predicted that the next generation of Aboriginal speakers will be entirely second-language learners (Norris, 2007, p. 27), a notion supported by the 2011 Census which states that currently only 15 percent of those Canadians with Aboriginal identity speak an Aboriginal mother tongue (2011, para. 2). This figure has decreased dramatically from the 2006 Census, which held that 25 per cent of First Peoples spoke an Aboriginal mother tongue (Jedwab, 2011, p. 46). Moreover, the Aboriginal population in

Canada is young; youth aged 24 and under make up around 46 percent of the population (StatsCan, 2011). Given that the survival of language depends entirely on its transmission to younger generations, the greater increase of young Aboriginals in the coming years will mean a faster language decline rate, if the current social and political conditions are upheld. Because this paper will focus mainly on those remote communities in northern Canada, it would be worth noting that those who speak an Aboriginal mother tongue in the territories of Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and the Yukon are sitting at 10 percent, 2.7 percent, and 0.5 percent respectively (StatsCan, 2011).

Apart from a few cities, such as Yellowknife or Whitehorse, Canadian northerners live in communities of fifty to three thousand people (Alia, 1999, p. 4). And because a language must be spoken in the home in order for it to survive (Norris, 2007, p. 21), Indigenous mother tongues are more prevalent in these isolated communities — especially those in the high Arctic which can only be reached by air travel. In other words, the remoteness and isolation of the village helps to contain spoken word in Aboriginal languages (Jedwab, 2011, p. 49). Nonetheless, linguistic intermarriages, and increased migration of young people from communities to urban areas where the majority language is spoken, are contributing to the decay of intergenerational language transmission, as well as the erosion of the communities, themselves (Norris, 2007, p. 27). For example, the small community of Old Crow is the Yukon's northernmost village and the only town in the territory that cannot be accessed by car (Alia, 2004, p. 76). The Gwich'in-speaking village of what were 245 people in 2011 (StatsCan, 2011), saw nearly a 20 percent decline in population since the year 2000 (StatsCan, 2001). The shrinking village does not bode well for the survival of the Gwich'in language in Old Crow,

especially as young people in the community are increasingly exposed to majority languages. In fact, only 45 people in Old Crow spoke Gwich'in as a mother tongue in 2011 (StatsCan, 2011), while the rest presumably acquired it as a second language. And while some scholars perceive second language acquisition as being able to slow the erosion of a native tongue (Jedwab, 2011, p. 51), the effects of learning the language as one's mother tongue can never be replaced, as this has significant effects on the intimacy one has to their identity, and the scope of unique perspective with which they view reality.

Linguistic decline is also prevalent in educational and workplace settings; it has been argued that a child's exposure to education in his or her native language is one of the most important influences in maintaining its survival (Jedwab, 2011, p. 51). While aboriginal-based school systems should be a priority, unfortunately most community schools are seriously ill equipped of the funds and resources needed to effectively run such institutions. Moreover, most teachers are from the communities themselves, have not acquired post-secondary degrees and are not professionally trained to educate students, much less develop curricula, lesson plans, and strengthen the literacy and proficiency of native tongues in an academic context (Kirkness, 1998, p. 93). Sadly, those native-speaking teachers who *are* professionally trained to educate students in heritage languages are often torn between helping students retain their communal linguistic identity and preparing them for professional life in the broader global society, which would require education in an official Canadian language: English or French (Yeoman, 2000, p. 121).

Additionally, some experts have become "torn or ambivalent about the value of Aboriginal language maintenance programs," (Yeoman, 2000, p. 121) especially given that established indigenous school systems in Canada, such as that of the Inuktitut-speaking people in Nunavik, northern Quebec, have resulted what recent empirical research calls "subtractive bilingualism," (Allen et. al, 2006, p. 582). This term posits that learning a second language and being exposed to it frequently (as was the case in residential school systems), leads to stagnation of the mother tongue. Accordingly, the study found that Nunavik students, who were not developing academic language proficiency through speaking Inuktitut at home, were not as fluent as they should have been in Inuktitut after having been routinely exposed to English or French in public school (p. 581). A survey on education by the Nunavik Educational Task Force reported that "parents notice[d] a progressive decline in their child's Inuktitut as they proceed[ed] from grade to grade" (p. 581). The curriculum in this system requires students to be taught solely in Inuktitut for the first few years, before shifting to a majority language in their later school years. The school system's aims are to "prepare students for active participation in the modern world," while "embrac[ing] and preserv[ing] native traditions, culture and language" (p. 579). Additionally, because the students were encouraged to begin developing academic language proficiency in English and French after a few years of being taught solely in their mother tongue, another resounding effect was that students didn't attain enough skill or practice to learn the majority language well either (p. 579).

Unfortunately, it must be also be noted that linguistic decline has long played a role in Canadian educational systems. The Aboriginal cultural genocide forever embedded in Canadian history propelled the disappearance of many Indigenous

languages. Up until the 1970s, the Church and State exerted their political influence through passing the *Indian Act* in 1876 and requiring all Aboriginal children to abandon their families, cultures, customs and languages, for an alienating education that promoted the Christian ways of the "white man" (Kirkness, 1998, p. 97). According to the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1994), residential schools were designed to "kill the Indian in the child" (p. 97). The years of brutalities — beatings, starvation, and other abuses — that children endured should they speak their native tongue or act in a way reflective of their traditional life continues to be a horrific shame in Canada's past. After being exposed to European mentalities, traditions and values, Aboriginal children would return home shameful of their native cultures and beliefs. Too many became abusers of their own children, taught their children their own spiritual confusion, and transmitted the use of European languages rather than their mother tongues (Kirkness, 1998, p. 101). The years of residential schooling rapidly accelerated the expansion of majority languages in Canada, while forcibly destroying Indigenous diversity; every Aboriginal person today is affected linguistically and culturally by the residential school system, despite the fact it no longer exists (p. 101). It would be worthwhile for the federal government to enact serious legislative measures aimed at preserving Aboriginal language and culture, as a step to reconciliation between the Indigenous and the rest of Canada.

The Importance of Media for Linguistic Minorities

While the social, historical and political forces mentioned above have collaborated in the efforts to suppress northern languages, one must not underestimate the role of the media in the Arctic. Ned Thomas (1995), a prominent scholar in the fields of

media and language studies, speaks to the historic hardships that territorial linguistic minorities — minorities who have not immigrated to a land, but are native to it — have faced when their communities are permeated with majority language media. Quite bluntly Thomas states that "a language that does not have access to media is doomed" (p. 179). The media are an important extension of human speech, while being the primary way for people to acquire knowledge of today's world (p. 179). Sadly, territorial linguistic minorities, such as Canada's First Peoples, have experienced a diminished linguistic sovereignty that was once normal to their land, while majority language media has increasingly infiltrated their personal spaces (p. 176). When languages that were once kept alive through normal conversation are then run through an electronic media environment, they become systematically subject to financial and political power struggles (p. 179). Not only can language minorities lose their sense of respect and confidence, but are convinced they are societally inferior, as their languages appear ill fitted to modern communication (p. 176). Having access to media in one's own language, especially that which is produced by the linguistic minorities themselves, not only normalizes the condition of that language, but also "internalizes the consciousness of the group" (p. 179). Linguistic minority media provides a solidified cultural narrative within current electronic communication (p. 183).

Today, one cannot confidently state that Canada's Northern Indigenous people have full access to complete, well-rounded media systems that are sculpted entirely by their mother tongues, or truly reflective of their traditional cultures. While proper linguistic media continues to be a priority for the Indigenous, the pervasion of English and French-language influences, especially among those community residents in the far

North, continue to suppress the linguistic normality of mother tongues in these areas. The following discussion will highlight the current media systems and related policies in the North, outline how northern languages are being hindered within these systems, and how Arctic minorities are aiming to use them as a means of uniting themselves through language and culture.

Media Systems and Related Policies in the North

The first programs broadcast to the northern Canada were created by Southerners, who often produced content that the Aboriginals found paternalistic and inaccurate to the Indigenous experience. Such offenses were not taken lightly among the nation's Aboriginals, who often voiced their discontent with Ottawa, to no avail (Alia, 1999, p. 82). It wasn't until the federal government's White Paper of 1969, proposing that the 'special status' label on Indigenous people be removed from the Indian Act as a means to create a 'just' and 'equal' Canadian society, that First Peoples truly took efforts to strengthen their bonds (UBC, 2009, para. 2). The now famous policy proposal was met with strong opposition and spurred on a period of Indigenous political assembling that resonates among Aboriginal society even today (para. 1). One of their initial strategies was the creation of the regional Aboriginal communication societies, each eventually covering a section of satellite landmass in Canada by the mid 1980s (p. 83). For the purposes of this paper, the current communications societies in Canada's Arctic regions include Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon (NNBY) (p. 86), the Native Communications Society of the Northwest Territories (NCSNWT), the Inuvialuit Communications Society (ICS) based out of Inuvik, and the Inuit Broadcasting

Corporation (IBC) for the Nunavut territory (p. 85). All societies adopted the mandate to serve Aboriginal communities, in particular those in areas that are remote and underserviced.

In 1973, the Anik 1 satellite system was launched in the North, which finally allowed the far North to connect to southern telecom infrastructure (Roth, 2014, p. 1). Satellites are critical for communications in the North, and in connecting remote regions to the rest of Canada, so the launch of Anik 1 will forever be an historic achievement for the Indigenous, who were finally presented with a way to insert their presence into a telecom infrastructure heavily influenced by commercially political aims (Roth, 2014, p. 2). In 1980, after the launch of the Anik 2 satellite, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) issued a document dubbed the "Therrien Report," which was the first document to highlight the importance of Aboriginal broadcasting and its role in preserving Indigenous language and culture (David, 2004, p. 12). It stated that:

> *"Canada must fulfill its obligation to provide opportunity for its native peoples to preserve the use of their languages and to foster the maintenance and development of their own particular cultures through broadcasting and other communications"* (CRTC, 1980).

The report spurred on a series of consultations among federal government departments, which then created, in 1983, the *Northern Broadcast Policy* and the *Northern Native Broadcast Access Program* (NNBAP). The policy emphasized the need for Northern native people to have fair access to broadcasting systems in order to promote their languages and cultures, while the program sought to provide long-term, stable funding to

broadcast organizations, and primarily the 13 Aboriginal communications societies (David, 2004, p. 13). Sadly, within a year the program's funding was cut dramatically, and many northern broadcasters found themselves operating on inadequate budgets (p. 13). In 1990, the CRTC released the *Native Broadcasting Policy*, which specifies guidelines for what constitutes native programming, along with requiring applicable radio stations to describe how their proposed broadcasting ensures the maintenance of Aboriginal language and values (David, 2004, p. 15). And finally, it should be noted that the previously mentioned policies all adhere under Canada's Broadcasting Act (1991), which, as described by Roth (2014), "legislates the rights of access, employment equity, and fair portrayal for all public, private, and community broadcasting in Canada," including that aboriginal peoples are to be given special legislated rights to promote their languages and cultures (p. 3).

To this day, Aboriginal broadcasts, especially those operating from the North, are governed by policy actions that, due to lack of resources, contradict the mandates they are supposed to serve. As will be elaborated upon in the forthcoming sections on radio, print and television, the Aboriginal communications societies, which control all three media, are consistently underfunded by the federal government, and challenged by upgrades to communication technologies, particularly in remote communities (Alia 1999, p. 82), thus hindering linguistic minorities from effectively establishing their culture within Canada's media environment.

Radio:

Today, traditional broadcast media, most prominently radio, plays a central role in communication and survival in the North (Alia, 2004, p. 78). As a grassroots medium, radio has long been the friendliest, most useful and accessible medium, particularly among Arctic villages. And while funding has wavered over the years, there remain several hundred local radio stations, united by a handful of regional networks, and including one national network: the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) (p. 80). Radio is a platform well suited to the oral natures and traditions of most Aboriginal languages, and accordingly the villages dispersed across the country are dependent upon local radio programming for accessible news, events coverage, and entertainment in their language, especially those in which the language is severely threatened (Alia, 2004, p. 91).

Many Aboriginal communications societies established in Canada have progressed to incorporate print, television, and radio broadcasting, though the territorial societies all still prioritize and promote their community radio channels (p. 85). Today, the Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon (NNBY) society proudly showcases its CHON-FM station, a community channel that, according to the Western Association of Aboriginal Broadcasters webpage, is dedicated to maintaining First Nations language and culture (2015); listeners can hear Gwich'in language programming, among others (CHON website, 2015). Additionally, the Northern Communications Society of the Northwest Territories (NCSNWT) offers a star attraction called CKLB-FM radio, which is entirely community-based and provides programming on news, current events, and

general discussion in a variety of the territory's official languages — Chipewyan, Slavey, Tlicho, and Sahtu, among others (CKLB website, 2016).

Unfortunately, most community radio stations have very little financial support, and thus are run by volunteers instead of paid workers, while the stations themselves often have outdated infrastructure. In 2013, the Kaskiw Radio Society in Fort Smith, NWT, made unsuccessful attempts to revive its community radio station after a few years of inaction due to outdated equipment and the resignation of the Society's president. Before the station fell to the wayside, it relied on donations for funding and technical equipment in order to offer its community a variety of programming, specifically in the Cree language (Northern Journal, 2013). While the NWT government has stepped in to help fund more established aboriginal language radio, it hasn't been all too keen to provide the same resources to small community stations (Gleeson, 2016). Even so, radio in the North has always experienced inconsistent funding needed to keep stations and their indigenous language programming thriving (Alia, 2004, p. 85) — an important aspect of this study that will be amplified further on.

CBC's Northern Service currently provides a large selection of Southern majority language programs to fill the primetime hours, though the hours between midday and 4 pm are dedicated to news and events coverage for the communities who speak Tlicho, Gwich'in, North and South Slavey, Chipewyan and Inuvialuktun. CBC advertises that, among the others, programs such as *Dehcho Dene* "[inform] South Slavey listeners from Wrigley to Fort Chipewywan about issues affecting their communities," while *Tide Godi* "highlights news and stories for the Dogrib (Tlicho) listeners throughout the Southern Mackenzie Valley area" (CBC, 2016). It's evident here that northern community

programming has made its mark in the CBC's national narrative. This hasn't always been the case though, particularly in the early days of the CBC's northern expansion, which was aimed primarily at bringing Southern-language programming to struggling minorities. After the *Broadcasting Act* in 1968 stated that a national broadcasting service would serve "in English and French, (while) serving the special needs of the geographic regions" (MacLennan, 2011, p. 64), evidently the CBC did not intend to live up to these standards when the Anik 1 satellite system allowed the corporation to reach the territories in 1972 (p. 64). While northerners expected the CBC to help unite their communities, the Corporation intended a top-down method to unite the entire country (p. 75). It was made clear to community radio stations longing for Aboriginal-language programs, that they would not receive support from the CBC unless they extended the CBC network under the Northern Broadcasting Plan of 1974 (p. 74), and when various community stations finally agreed to accept support, it was evident that the CBC had not fulfilled its mandate of uniting the country.

Speculatively, Southern Canada today rarely hears of news from the North in its mainstream media, unless it's disaster coverage or political or economic tensions over resources between Indigenous peoples and the rest of Canada. Such coverage tends to encompass the North as foreign, hostile and dangerous, and does little promote a sense of community between the North and South (Copeland, 2012, p. 148), furthering the colonial mindset toward Indigenous people and their issues. In contrast, the CBC seems to have trapped the North in a Southern-influenced bubble; the proliferation of English and French-language programs in Northern radio broadcasts is worrisome both for scholars and the general public who see these infiltrations as culturally imperialist tools

to quell the remaining Indigenous identities, however indirect this suppression may be (p. 140). While radio has remained a core medium for identity, and an intimate, grassroots platform for experimentation amongst the Indigenous, it has constantly been barraged with inconsistent funding, a lack of resources, and outside media influences. Current broadcast policies are struggling to be met given the diversity of Northern languages, and it doesn't seem as if the government has historically had any political will or true interest in making sure the communication needs of the North are being met to the extent to which they should be.

Print:

Of northern media systems, print publications have consistently struggled to survive for substantial periods of time, as evidenced by the many failed northern publications catalogued in the Bibliography of Canadian Inuit Periodicals (2011). What began with harsh budget cuts in the 1990's (Alia, 1999, p. 77) has led to what could now be considered a crisis. Of the very few print publications for Indigenous communities, there are two published in minority languages, the Nunavut publications *Nunatsiaq News*, based out of Iqaluit, and *Kivalliq News*, from Rankin Inlet – both published in English and Inuktitut. Remote communities do not have access to any substantial print material in their native tongues, other than the few educational resources that can be found online, and while many northern villages publish community newsletters, these publications are in English, which is perhaps reflective of their primarily English-speaking populations.

However, there could be a multitude of factors contributing to the lack of print materials in minority languages. As previously mentioned, print is difficult to fund and

resource; staff often find themselves overworked and underpaid, and the increasing costs of living don't help to support a livelihood working in the print industry (Alia, 1999, p. 78). Other factors include the severe lack of literacy skills among remote populations (p. 40), a lack of technical and industry-related skills among community members to create decent publications, and the fact that these endangered languages are heavily imbued with oral-specific traditions that conflict with the textual nature of print (Yeoman, 2000, p. 129). Sadly, print media in the North hasn't, by any means, serviced the linguistic needs of endangered language minorities.

Northern Television:

Television is a far different medium than its broadcast counterpart, the radio. While radio is cheap, easily accessible, and requires only one producer from a small studio to operate effectively, television production requires a large budget, complex studio, multiple trained technical personnel, and a home distribution mechanism (David, 2012, p. 13). In the Arctic, acquiring these production necessities is more easily said than done, especially between small and widely dispersed communities. Nonetheless, the origins of Arctic television, as with radio, have predominantly been non-commercial; in other words, Northern television has traditionally operated on a public broadcasting basis — to serve the needs of the minority community, rather than to focus on creating products for the marketable television industry. The launch of the Anik 2 satellite in 1978 brought in a slew of dominant-language Canadian programming to those with television access in the North (White, 2005, p. 54). Because Northerners were upset that they had not been consulted over their programming preferences, and that their positions as willing receptors of Southern programming had been taken for granted (p. 54), the federal

government, with the influence of the Therrien report, responded in 1981 with funding to create the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), which would share a channel with CBC North on Anik 2 (Alia, 1999, p. 101). According to IBC's website, the corporation owns five media centers across Nunavut, with the mandate to provide cultural and linguistic content by and for the Inuit of Canada (IBC, 2016), just as a public service broadcaster would. One of IBC's goals is to "strengthen the Inuit cultural identity, language, mythology, social patterns and features which define being Inuit" (IBC, 2016), thus laying its claim to linguistic preservation. Its small list of broadcasts include various Inuktitut-language programs, such as *Takuginai* or "Look Here," the "premiere aboriginal language program in North America, directed at children," and *Niqitsiat*, a program dedicated to cooking traditional Inuit foods (IBC, 2016).

IBC currently broadcasts all of its programs on the Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network (APTN), the national cable network for Canada's Indigenous peoples. APTN also aims to follow what it claims is a public service mandate, by providing Aboriginals of different languages with 120 hours of weekly programming that caters to their needs (Alia, 1999,p. 111). While included in all basic cable packages, the network touts that its programs meld traditional storytelling with modern elements taken from mainstream media. It features programs on Indigenous current events, cooking, documentaries on Aboriginal life, and news in various languages (Baltruschat, 2004, p.51). Its multilingual programming allows for up to 15 of Canada's indigenous languages to be heard on television, including children's programs broadcast in minority languages, which seek to educate young Northerners on linguistic traditions (p. 51).

Some viewers hold that Aboriginal language minorities would have little substance on Canadian television if it weren't for the APTN (Roth et. al, 2011, p. 392).

Public or Privatized Broadcasting?

However, the road to establishing the APTN hasn't been smooth. The network was licensed by the CRTC in 1999, an eager successor to Television Northern Canada (TVNC). TVNC, incorporated in 1990 as a response to ongoing concerns with the infiltration of primetime southern-language television, became the primary northern television network, with non-profit aims to produce and distribute programming to aboriginal northerners (Alia, 1999, p. 102). It featured a variety of endangered Arctic languages, such as Inuvialuktun, Tlicho, North and South Slavey, Hän, Kaska, Tagish and Tlingit (p. 104). Mirroring the IBC, TVNC served to strengthen territorial languages through content produced by territorial citizens, themselves. The APTN, on the other hand, spawned from the idea that the TVNC should expand to a southern Canadian audience, as a means to unite all of Canada's Indigenous, to represent Aboriginal culture to non-Aboriginal Canadians, and thus bridge the cultural, political and racial gaps between the two societies (Roth et. al, 2011, p. 390). Jennifer David, former Director of Communications for APTN, writes in her book *Original People, Original Television* (2012) that upon requesting support from the Aboriginal communications societies for the new network's proposal, her team was met with opposition from corporate forces such as CBC, Shaw, and Rogers, who weren't keen on the idea that this public broadcaster be mandatory on all Canadian household cable packages. In contrast, the Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon (NNBY) society sent a furious letter to APTN

claiming that the deep structural changes to the network would undermine the needs of Aboriginals in the North (p. 122). Various NNBAP groups had similar concerns with what they perceived to be a Southern step away from public service media, toward a network that was now dabbling with mainstream elements in the pull toward more commercialized interests (p. 123).

This prospect is worrisome for the survival of minority Indigenous languages because the inherent logic of commercialized media lies in stark contrast to the aims and values of public broadcasting, which seeks to serve public audiences by providing programming that they 'need' rather than 'want.' As Tanner Mirrlees et. al state in *The Television Reader* (2012), commercial media's aim is first and foremost to earn profit by treating the audience as a consumer-base (p. 18). Programs are viewed as commodities and their operational structures are sculpted by capitalism and the state (p. 18). Within a capitalist framework, television networks aim to sell their programs to as many consumers as possible, thus eventually compelling smaller companies to converge with other companies in order to reach larger audience bases (p. 19). Additionally, to garner the best ratings possible for their programs, television production companies adopt mainstream aspects to their content, while television networks, cognizant of acquiring and scheduling programs that will receive the highest ratings, adopt mainstream aspects to their appearance and operations (p. 22). Capitalist forces, from a Marxist perspective, pervade most areas of life around the globe, and can be perceived as the direct cause of socio-economic divides between people — in this case, between many of Canada's northern Indigenous and the rest of the country.

Accordingly, niche audiences and their particular interests are left forgotten in commercialized media, as it would be impossible for corporate media outlets to gain sufficient profit through broadcasting endangered Aboriginal languages and culture to mainstream audiences. As most of Canada relies on Southern English and French-language programming, there are zero prospects for the survival of northern minority languages through mainstream media consumption. Furthermore, because commercialized services are operated by corporate institutions, the importance of the media, itself, for the revival of minority languages becomes apparent, rather than the institutional frameworks they can be operated or supported by. Hypothetically, media isn't required by these institutions to help facilitate language revival; though in most cases some sort of institutional framework is required to provide funds and support for the media to operate effectively. In this case, to revive and maintain Canada's Northern languages, localized northern public broadcasting systems, operated at arms length from corporate institutions, must be supported by governmental structures through effective policy and financing.

Given that APTN has grown considerably as a television network, the tensions between the North and South have and continue to permeate the network's operations; many northerners feel that APTN no longer reflects their unique lifestyles as TVNC once did, that the network has pushed Aboriginal languages to inconvenient timeslots in order to make way for English and French-language programming during primetime hours, that territorial current events and news are not being covered to the extent at which they should, and that the growing Southern pull toward high-budget, mainstream media has proven that Aboriginal television has turned on itself and its original mandate of uniting

Northerners with broadcasts truly reflective of their unique traditions and languages (David, 2012, p. 199). Similar concerns have surfaced at the IBC, apart from being openly criticized that its programs contain too many Southern elements, it has been chastised for basing its headquarters in Ottawa, rather than in Nunavut where the corporation could be managed solely by Northerners, and could create more than 300 jobs in the North (White, 2005, p. 56). It's been perceived that Ottawa has too much control over the station; so much so that Zacharias Kunuk and Paul Apak, two of the station's producers, resolved in 1990 to break ties with the corporation in order to administer an independent Inuit company called Isuma Igloolik Productions. Isuma, headquartered in Igloolik, Nunavut, has since fulfilled its mandate to produce independent films starring Inuit actors, and to reflect and educate on traditional Inuit culture, language and heritage (p. 58). The short to medium-length productions filmed since the company's inception are essentially inassimilable by larger production companies influenced by market forces, thus represent forms of media that are original and unique to Aboriginal oral traditions and visual narrative structures (Santo, 2004, p. 392). An example of this is a mini-series entitled *Nunavut*, which depicts the daily life of an Inuit family during the 1940s. The series has been internationally lauded by Indigenous communities for how it introduces traditional Inuit forms of storytelling and communal creativity to modern media forms (p. 381).

On the contrary, it's evident that APTN has incorporated an overall market-based framework based on Southern mainstream elements, in order to create a product fit for a national audience, not just a northern one. For example, APTN follows mainstream broadcasting operations by slotting programs in half-hour to one-hour timeslots, and apart

from actually importing American television shows and films, many of the Canadian-produced programs reflect the standard traits of 'Americanized' narratives. For example, the program *Mohawk Girls* is a comedic-drama that depicts the lives of a gossipy group of young women from a Mohawk nation reserve. The Mohawk women conduct themselves in flirtatious manners conducive to mainstream Western stereotypes; they wear trendy clothes, generous makeup, and behave through storylines unreflective of Mohawk traditional values, but akin to the popular American television show *Sex and the City*. Similarly, the APTN original drama *Blackstone* follows the lives of the Blackstone First Nation who are trying to rebuild their community after it has been destroyed in a fire. The protagonists each have their own personal difficulties, which include trafficking, murder, romance, betrayal and other dramatic and provocative elements that one would find in an American crime-drama. It should be noted that the visual structure of APTN's website is reminiscent of a commercial corporation like Global or CityTV — a sensationalist layout with flashy graphics and program descriptions that would appeal to an English or French audience. While there are a few programs that grace APTN's schedule with traditional Indigenous languages (most of which are produced by IBC), they seem to be few.

APTN is, indeed, molding a unique hybrid of globalization and localization (Baltruschat, 2004, p. 53); it aims to provide a public service to Aboriginal linguistic minorities, while also producing content marketable to outside audiences through 'Americanized' content and advertising practices similar to a privatized service (Roth et. al, 2011, p. 390). Further evidence lies in the fact that APTN regularly sells its programs to other networks, and has discussed the idea of expanding to a global Indigenous

television service, similar to BBC World Service (p. 390), which would amplify the drive to produce majority language content that appeals to broader audiences. The dual notion of retaining global and local audiences is even stated in APTN's official mandate, which holds that the network aims for "the promotion of and education about local (or pan-indigenous) culture and language," and "the increase of revenue through exporting programs globally and attending international television markets" (Baltruschat, 2004, p. 53). However, such globalization has encouraged the erosion of the Northern local public sphere, and re-territorialization of Indigenous media in the North, as Northern Aboriginals have once again considered alternative forms of mediated Indigenous storytelling. With so many Northerners unhappy at what they perceive is the loss of their original public broadcaster, it's become clear that APTN cannot simultaneously attract urban, globalized audiences while catering to the linguistic and cultural needs of the North, much less provide Aboriginal-language programming during the primetime hours (David, 2012, p. 199).

David (2012) recognizes that APTN does owe its origins to TVNC, but reminds readers that loss of financial support is something that public broadcasters routinely experience in Canada, thus propelling them to expand and diversify their audience bases (p. 199). When the government reduces funding and encourages public broadcasters to bring in advertising revenues, they in essence feed into privatized interests by conveying that if a media system cannot make a profit from its work, then it does not deserve to be part of Canadian media (Alia, 1999, p. 112). A challenge now for northern communities eager to retain their linguistic traditions, is how they will navigate the democratic deficit of increasingly privatized media in order to create efficient publicly serviced media

systems. Speculatively, it may be impossible for minority language programming to survive dominant commercial forces due and their vast social, political and economic influences; therefore it's the government's responsibility to properly support and uphold its legislative mandates on Indigenous public broadcasting.

The Internet as a Tool for Language Revival

Over the last 20 years or so, the Internet has become not only a household commodity, but a necessity for acquiring and distributing current and vital information in modern society. The global information flows inherent to the Internet are seen as a two-way street among Indigenous communities and those interested in Internet-use among linguistic minorities. On the one hand, the Internet can be highly assimilative; most of the textual, audio and visual information circulating the Net are in dominant languages, and surround mainstream ways of life, which can contribute to the further deterioration of minority language and culture (Yeoman, 2000, p. 121). On the other hand, the Internet is a useful resource for preserving language through community connectivity, educational development, and for providing an avenue for alternative publishing, film and broadcasting in one's language. It can connect linguistic minorities from dispersed locations together into a single virtual space where they can share information and strengthen their linguistic identities, and it can provide language educators with spaces to store and develop curricula, and to share these resources with other educators (p. 120). Currently, a plethora of websites dedicated to various endangered languages provide Internet users, from both within and outside the community, access to educational resources. For example, the Tlicho First Nation provides free online Tlicho dictionaries both for children and adults, as well as printable reading and writing exercises (Tlicho

website, 2016). Similarly the Kaska Dene Council provides links to audio recordings of archived phrases, a published alphabet, and is currently in the process of creating an official Kaska dictionary with the help of the University of British Columbia (Kaska Dene Council, 2016). In addition, the Yukon Native Language Centre (YNLC) and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) websites both act as hubs for educational language resources in a variety of languages, which include Tagish, Tinglit, Gwich'in, South Slavey, and the extremely endangered Hän language, which according to the YNLC is only spoken among a handful of community members in Dawson City, Yukon (YNLC, 2016).

Language-learners can further make use of the Internet to engage in personally meaningful interactions using Aboriginal tongues, which include different types of informal communication such as face-to-face interactions through Skype or other video-interaction software, along with the exchange of ideas, which promotes language normalization (p. 128). Jim Bell, the editor at *Nunatsiaq News* in Iqaluit, Nunavut, stated that the Internet "provides an antidote to the cultural demolition that has occurred in non-Aboriginal [media]" (Alia, 1999, p. 119). Today, digital smartphone technology allows for mobile apps to be developed in heritage languages, as well as for increased personalization of communication between members of language communities. The Government of the Northwest Territories website provides an array of language apps developed for smartphones and iPads, aimed at providing language-learners with interactive gaming experiences in Gwich'in, South Slavey, Tlicho, and Shutaotine (GNWT, 2016).

Sadly, however, access to affordable connectivity in the North still remains an issue, due to lack of web infrastructure and program funding, particularly among the remote communities (Roth, 2014, p. 1). Satellites have been crucial for information access in the North, but according to Lorna Roth (2014), access isn't nearly enough to meet the demands for local connectivity and use among small northern villages (p. 2). The service disparity in these regions is a product of "economic profit-based models associated with urban regional planning" (p. 4), which means that apart from battling the frigid climate conditions of Arctic Nordicity, Canada's most popular telecom services will not offer their broadband infrastructures due to high costs and low profits in geographic areas of scarce and dispersed populations (p. 4). Unlike the telephone's universality laws, Internet service providers (ISPs) are not legally required to provide Internet to these communities (p. 4), and the ISPs that do currently offer service in the North are exorbitantly expensive compared with service prices found in urban southern Canada. For some perspective, a high-speed Shaw Internet plan in Vancouver, which allows for download speeds at 60 megabytes (MB) per second, and 450 gigabytes (GB) per month of data transfer, costs an introductory rate of $60 per month (Shaw, 2016). In contrast, NorthwesTel, the Arctic's most widespread ISP, provides a high-speed Internet plan with 5 MB download speed and 45 GB of data per month to the Yukon's northernmost community Old Crow for $229 per month. Far worse are Qiniq's broadband services in Nunvaut, which advertise 2.5 MB download speeds and 30 GB of monthly data for $369 per month (Qiniq, 2016). Slow and unaffordable Internet service permeates Canadian Arctic populations, who may not have many other ways to preserve

and share their traditional languages with outside communities through such an interactive medium.

It's no stretch to claim that affordable Internet rates must be supported by efficient and unwavering federal policy; those with mandates to expand the Web nationwide and provide the North with equal access to the same high-speed Internet rates that southern Canadians currently access. Until then, the Arctic Indigenous continue to form what Lorna Roth (2014) terms "digital bypasses" (p. 5) to meet their access needs. The aforementioned Igloolik Isuma Productions, in 2008, created a website entitled IsumaTV, in partnership with Canadian cultural funding programs, in order to provide the North with free access to hundreds of Inuktikut films, as well as over 2,000 Aboriginal documentaries in 41 different languages (p. 5). To successfully distribute the content to local remote communities who cannot afford proper bandwidth access, IsumaTV created the Digital Indigenous Democracy Project (DID), which allows communities to install inexpensive local servers with uploaded IsumaTV content, and to connect each household to the server (p. 6). According to its website, the DID project has now made plans to expand its server to international regions, including the Sami Indigenous of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, Poland, and Russia, and the CLACPI Indigenous network, based out of Latin America (DID website, 2016).

Finally, a sub-ocean fibre optic Internet cable is currently being implemented by the company Arctic Fibre; a project that aims to connect Japan to Western Europe by a cable passed through the Arctic Ocean and Northwest Passage, in order to provide cheap connectivity to various Arctic communities (Roth, 2014, p. 6). In May, 2016, CBC reported that the first phase of the project, which will bring network access to the

Alaska's northwest coast, was currently underway (CBC, May 2016). The completion of the project will supposedly offer high-speed Internet access to thousands more Indigenous households, including to just over 50 percent of Nunavut residents (Roth, 2014, p. 6). Though it's important to note that this technological advancement still won't be available to all Northern language minorities.

Discussion and Conclusion: An Aboriginal Languages Act for Canada

Despite the fact that the majority of Aboriginal languages in Canada are now endangered, the state has not provided any federal legislation nor underlying policy for the preservation of Indigenous languages (Galley, 2009, p. 36). Valerie Galley (2009) highlights that Aboriginals, as Canadian citizens, have an interest in restoring their languages (p. 36), and, as previously discussed, have made numerous nationwide attempts to preserve these linguistic identities through public education, broadcasting, print, and digital formats. Sadly, a long history riddled with cultural genocide, failing education systems and southern migration have compelled the loss of a truly enriched Canadian linguistic mosaic. Moreover, the CRTC's current policies in action on Indigenous media and broadcasting (1983) have long since proven themselves to be unsupportive and contradictory, as the federal government continuously withholds the proper funding, training, and other resources from Northern public broadcasters. Other obstacles that the North must face are the prospects of what a globalized world would enforce upon linguistic minorities; as public broadcasters are continuously denied funding, they are compelled to adopt commercialized aspects into their operations, such as advertising procedures and sensationalized narratives and visuals that defy traditional

Aboriginal culture. When TVNC fell prey to increased market forces, Northern aboriginals felt that they had lost the public media outlet that had been dutifully implemented to serve their communal interests. Will Aboriginal media foremost aim to serve the public good, or will it primarily be driven by profit and high ratings — victims of commercialization and media convergence? Finally, what measures will be taken to ensure that the Arctic Indigenous have access to fast, affordable Internet? Service prices in Nunavut are up to six times higher than they are in Vancouver, and given that the North is not a wealthy area, the widening digital divide in these regions bars remote linguistic communities from accessing an invaluable platform that could retain and rejuvenate endangered mother tongues, possibly even more than our current broadcasting systems could. If linguistic diversity is to survive in Canada, the above barriers to language rights *must* be overcome with the support of efficient legislative and policy measures.

As Lorna Roth (2011) so justly declares, to tout Canada as a multilingual country is to "attribute quaint customs and primordial identities to a Canadian mosaic that systematically denies minorities access to political and economic opportunities" (p. 384). These contradictions of identity are further expressed in Canada's national legislation. The *Official Languages Act* of 1985 recognizes English and French as the languages of parliament and governmental institutions, and thus systematically enforces their mainstream use in daily public life. However, the *Act* also guarantees "the recognition of the importance of preserving and enhancing the use of languages other than English and French while strengthening the status and use of the official languages" (1985, p. 2); a "guarantee" that clearly hasn't been fulfilled. Furthermore, numerous sections in the

Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) outline the contradictory nature of state treatment toward Aboriginals. The most obvious is the fundamental freedom that guarantees Canadians the "freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication" (*Charter*, sec. 2b). Moreover, section 22 states that nothing in section 16 to 20 on Canada's official languages "abrogates or derogates from any legal or customary right or privilege acquired or enjoyed either before or after the coming into force of this Charter with respect to any language that is not English or French" (*Charter,* sec. 22). Finally, section 25 yields that the *Charter* will not impact "any aboriginal, treaty or other rights and freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada" (*Charter*, sec. 25), which evidently includes language rights.

Given the inefficient policies implemented under this legislation, it's worthwhile to suggest that an Official Aboriginal Languages Act be established for Canada. Such an Act would ensure that Indigenous languages are treated with the same focus and depth as English and French, solidify in legislation the priority to upgrade inclusive Aboriginal language education for young First Nations, and prioritize language revitalization through means of mediated communication. It would further address the specific linguistic challenges relevant to Northern and Arctic Indigenous communities (Galley, 2009, p. 39). The territorial governments, particularly that of the Northwest Territories, have proven that linguistic preservation is possible through their own territorial language acts. While equality among people is important, the NWT *Official Languages Act* (1988) focuses on diversity through "preserv[ing] and promot[ing] Aboriginal cultures through the protection of their languages." And while the territorial government appointed an Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Board in 2004 (Galley, 2009, p. 40), these policy

measures cannot operate to the fullest without proper funding from the federal government, given the direct funding ties that the territories have with Ottawa.

An Aboriginal Languages Act would ensure that Canada remains compliant with its promises to adopt the universal standards outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which affirms the rights for Aboriginals "to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures" (UNDRIP, Article 13), along with the right "to establish their own media in their own languages" (UNDRIP, Article 16). Additionally, in 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its 94 Calls to Action for mending the relationship between the Indigenous and rest of Canada. Of these recommendations, numbers 13 through 17 explicitly call upon the federal government to "acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights" (2015, p. 2), and to implement an Aboriginal Languages Act that would "ensure the sufficient funds for Aboriginal language revitalization and preservation" (p. 2), among other strategies. In December 2015, the newly elected Liberal government responded to the TRC by stating that it would comply with all Calls to Action (*The Globe and Mail*, Dec. 15, 2015). Whether the Liberals will keep their promises has yet to be determined.

Finally, an Aboriginal Languages Act could then guide the formation of strengthened cultural and broadcasting policies among Aboriginal language media — specifically those that will ensure Northern public broadcasting the funds to maintain itself while providing decent employment incomes for Indigenous media industry workers, allowing Arctic communities equal and affordable access to high-speed Internet,

and potentially allowing for Indigenous peoples to operate their communications systems within a digital self-deterministic framework; that is, media systems that are managed within Indigenous-defined community institutions and policies that are supported by the State (McMahon, 2014, p. 4). The immediate implementation of such legislative and policy measures is crucial to revive the North's endangered languages, to preserve critical and sorely undervalued Canadian cultural identities, and to ensure that linguistic media in Canada proliferates with a cultural diversity that the nation can truly be proud of.

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