

***Kina'muanej Knjanjiji'naq mut ntakotmnew tli'lnu'ltik (In the Foreign Language, Let us Teach our Children not to be Ashamed of Being Mi'kmaq)***

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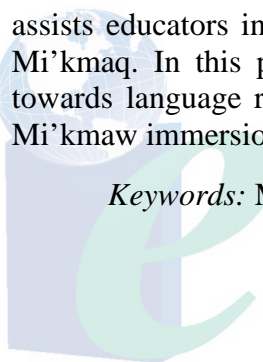
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**Abstract**

Colonialism has assimilated and suppressed Indigenous languages across Turtle Island (North America). A resurgence of language is needed for First Nation learners and educators and this resurgence is required if Indigenous people are going to revitalize, recover and reclaim Indigenous languages. The existing actions occurring within Indigenous communities contributing to language resurgence include immersion schools. Eskasoni First Nation opened its doors in September 2015 to a full immersion school separate from the English speaking educational centers. This move follows the introduction of Mi'kmaq immersion over ten years earlier within the English speaking school in the community. The Mi'kmaw immersion school includes the Ta'n L'nuey Etl-mawlukwatmunk Mi'kmaw Curriculum Development Centre that assists educators in translating educational curriculum from the dominant English language to Mi'kmaq. In this paper, stories are shared about the Eskasoni immersion program's actions towards language resurgence through a desire-based lens, based on rich narratives from three Mi'kmaw immersion educators.

**Keywords:** Mi'kmaq language immersion; immersion schools; language resurgence



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*Language is the soul of the people;*  
 Wsitunn na wjijaqmijual wskwijinu'k  
*Language is the mind of the people;*  
 Wsitunn na ta'n telte'tmi'tij wskwijinu'k  
*Language is the spirit of the people*  
 Wsitunn na mlki—ktlamsutimuow wskwijinu'k

In identifying the importance of language resurgence in the face of settler colonialism, First Nations have turned to their own communities for the survival, retention, revitalization, and reclaiming of Indigenous languages. This paper is a study of the Mi'kmaq immersion school in Eskasoni First Nation in Una'maki (Cape Breton, N.S.).

In 1996, St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick offered a certificate course on immersion pedagogy. Mi'kmaq immersion educators immediately took interest in this course because the Eskasoni School Board members saw a need to teach Mi'kmaq children in their first language. It was an era when Indigenous nations would take control of education through a policy called Indian Control of Indian Education (Assembly of First Nations, 2010). During that time, the Eskasoni School Board director sent three immersion educators to take the St. Thomas' Immersion Pedagogy course with plans to initiate a program in Eskasoni.

In 1999, the Eskasoni School Board started a pilot project to have students taught in Mi'kmaq. The immersion pilot program was initiated to accommodate a small number of students from Kindergarten to Grade 3. Once Eskasoni parents discovered that an immersion program was being offered, many parents wanted their children to enroll. The immersion program was first offered in the same building as the English-language school in the community. However, in September 2015, the immersion program opened its doors in its own separate building, teaching Kindergarten to Grade 4 in Mi'kmaq with 128 students. The students stay for lunch and are immersed in Mi'kmaq all day. The Eskasoni immersion school is supported by the school board and the community. Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (MK) has also been a huge support to the immersion school, providing access to ideas and materials that immersion educators can use instead of English materials.

Eskasoni educators see their own immersion program as becoming more successful because of being separate from the influence of the dominant English language. These educators visualize the immersion program moving up to higher grades in the near future. The Eskasoni principal has had this dream of having an immersion program even before she started teaching, but she never imagined that they would ever have their own building. Her only regret is her own children did not have the chance to experience this immersion school; still, she is grateful that she taught them to speak Mi'kmaq right from birth, within her home. Through establishing Indigenous (Mi'kmaq)<sup>1</sup>immersion schools, language programs, and language applications, both native and non-Native are reminded of the importance of Indigenous,<sup>2</sup> First Nations, Aboriginal, Native, and Indian language survival. This paper is important because it addresses the existing actions occurring within Mi'kmaw territory that contribute towards developing sustainable tools in language resurgence for the future generations. In this research, we use Indigenous auto-ethnographic narratives (Whitinui, 2014) explicit to Indigenous ways of knowing. The

conversations with the Eskasoni immersion school educators were conducted in an ethical and culturally appropriate manner, drawing on knowledge of protocol and cultural understanding of community.

### **Context and Background**

A review of the literature supporting language resurgence in Mi'kmaq immersion programs and schools identified five theoretical areas: (a) cultural and language survival, (b) pedagogy of the land, (c) community involvement and supportive actions, (d) importance of immersion schools and Indigenous educators, and (e) finding a balance using technology. The literature supports actions within Indigenous communities contributing to Indigenous language resurgence. Research provides support for the Mi'kmaq immersion schools that support Mi'kmaq language resurgence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Cultural and Language Survival**

There is a spiritual and cultural presence in the survival of language that Indigenous and Mi'kmaq people feel and understand. These feelings include the sacred respect denoted within the language, and within creation stories, existence and ways of knowing. Indigenous languages have a relationship with the land, spirits, and the environment that exists within these feelings, today. An interconnected holistic energy flows through Indigenous languages, providing instruction for spiritual survival and connection to ancestors and the land (Battiste, 1998; George, 2015; Metallic, 2008; Simpson 2008).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the fluent Mi'kmaw speakers in Mi'kmaq communities are primarily Elders here in the Atlantic provinces, and only a small number of those categorized as the seventh generation have gained fluency (From interviews conducted in October 2014). Language survival, in the face of linguistic, is confronted when Indigenous communities adopt aggressive programs to teach, revive, reclaim, and speak their Indigenous languages (Bear Nicholas, 2008; Perley, 2011; Simpson, 2008). Language recovery becomes the most significant factor in the restoration, regeneration, and survival of Indigenous knowledges that are the most in danger of extinction today (Battiste, 2010; Perley 2011). Perley (2011) shares staggering statistics that frame linguistic imperialism in Canada:

That of the 53 distinct Native Languages in Canada, only three (3) have a chance of surviving the next ten years, eight (8) are facing extinction, twenty-nine (29) are deteriorating very rapidly, and thirteen (13) are moderately endangered. (p. 39)

Language survival represents the responsibility of the current generation and for allies to educate Indigenous children in their first language; thus, ensuring the survival of Indigenous way of life and culture.

**Pedagogy of the land.** For language resurgence to be successful within Mi'kmaq territory, the language of the land must become desirable through intergenerational learning about living off, and learning from, the land. The land becomes a respectable resource for young and new language learners to reclaim, rebuild, and learn Mi'kmaq. Here on Mi'kma'ki (within the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, and Maine) the Mi'kmaq language remains vital because of the relationship with the land. The land, (Mother Earth or Turtle Island), and the specifically the lands of North America are the vehicles for Indigenous language survival. As we take seriously

our responsibility within land pedagogy, we are reminded that as long as we take care of the land, the land will take care of us and the next seven generations to come. Indigenous ways of knowing respects that the land is a gift given to us from the Creator, Niskam (Battiste, 2013; Metallic, 2008; Simpson, 2008).

**Community involvement and supportive actions.** The process of community and elder involvement brings together the language speaker and the learner, involving children, elders and families within a home to restore language and creating language nests within communities (Pitawanakwat, 2008; Simpson, 2008). A language nest is one way intergenerations transfer and restore Indigenous languages.

A thriving First Nation community uses its' language as a source of nationhood (Alfred, 1999; Grande, 2004). In Mi'kma'ki (Mi'kmaq territory), we believe that Mi'kmaw should be made the official language within each community and one of the official languages in the provincial legislature. This would make teaching, learning, and speaking the Mi'kmaq language a priority.

**Importance of immersion schools and Indigenous educators.** Mi'kmaw immersion schools began in 1997 with the support of Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK). MK represents and advocates for the educational interest of the Mi'kmaw communities across most of Nova Scotia. MK protects the educational and Mi'kmaw language rights of the Mi'kmaq people through Mi'kmaq language resurgence. Both Battiste (2013) and Simpson (2014) assert the fostering of a strong generation of Elders, by having Indigenous languages taught for decades (not just weeks at a time) in schools or universities. Rather, more than 700 plus hours of immersion at a minimum is needed for students to become fluent. Indigenous immersion schools from Kindergarten to Grade 3 provide fundamental prerequisites for Indigenous education and language resurgence. Creating successful immersion schools requires community involvement at the grass roots level, language efforts, planning, organization, and Indigenous frameworks and resources.

However, Indigenous educators speak and write about the importance of Indigenous language resurgence, only then to go on and speak and write entirely in English (Battiste, 2008; Grande, 2004; Wilson, 2008). Identifying this form of cognitive imperialism in the field of education reminds us, as Indigenous educators, of the importance of teaching and speaking in Indigenous languages. Grande (2004) says we need to turn to our own people, our own educators in our communities, to recognize the value of indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing. Aboriginal languages are irreplaceable resources in any educational reforms.

**Finding a balance using technology.** Technology is becoming a widely used device within classrooms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Eskasoni immersion school is pioneering the use of a number of technological resources in Mi'kmaq. It is common to see the use of iPads and smart phones rather than books, although schools today have not stopped using books totally, but few of these are in languages other than English in English speaking provinces. Using technology within Mi'kmaq immersion schools creates a virtual language nest for sharing digital resources, language materials, and for utilizing interactive talking dictionaries and language applications across Mi'kma'ki.

Recent research on distance education provided through technology in a Mi'kmaq community in Elsipogtog, N.B. highlighted the importance of finding a balance of the right kind

of technologies to meet the community needs (Simon, Burton, Lockhart, & O'Donnell, 2014). The Indigenous educators in the immersion school are committed to finding a balance in using technology. Finding ways to transmit the Mi'kmaq language into digital resources ensures that the future generations will have access to Mi'kmaq, the culture, and identity, and ensures the interconnection with Elders' oral stories and teachings. Modern technology can give members of First Nations communities the opportunity to hear their languages in their homes (Perley, 2011) through the access of television, phones, iPads, social media, and internet and this is worth pursuing if it leads to a strengthening of language use and understanding.

However, Simpson (2008) warns about how modern technology continues to be toxic to mother earth and the environment. Indigenous knowledge and language production requires increasingly larger amounts of resources, computers, high-tech equipment, and digital libraries that make them accessible outside the communities. Digital technologies are also a requirement for research projects and necessary for the growth of capitalism. Further, modern technology and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can hinder and disembodiment Indigenous languages (Bear Nicholas, 2008). Therefore, we need to be reflective in how we use technology to support language resurgence.

**Summarizing the five theoretical areas.** A large number of Indigenous children in Canada are still effectively learning only the dominant English language in school. English is the language mandated by force of law in most regions of this country and the government policy of having children learn only the official languages of Canada creates road blocks as Indigenous people attempt to fight against language genocide. Having Mi'kmaq immersion schools supported by communities and policies is helping the Mi'kmaq Nation rebuild and revive Indigenous ways of knowing, language, and cultural identity. Today, Indigenous immersion schools are contributing towards language resurgence and community-shared resources of food, traditional medicines, clothing, supplies, teachings, and experiences.

### **The Study**

This study explored the five theoretical areas (described above) through research in the Mi'kmaq community of Eskasoni First Nation. We incorporated Indigenous methodologies congruent with Indigenous paradigms, including linguistic elements such as storytelling and oral traditions captured in documented transcripts from audio-recorded conversations. Indigenous methodologies are guided by Indigenous ways of knowing and epistemologies that release this dependency on Western research traditions (Kovach, 2009; Whittinui, 2014; Wilson, 2008). According to Kovach (2009) and Simpson (2008), Indigenous knowledge is already embedded in the language and all everyone needs to do, is learn the language. If the knowledge to better understand one's Elders is released through learning one's Indigenous language, then Indigenous ways of knowing require one to learn the language.

We conducted this study as part of the Atlantic research of the First Nations Innovation (FNI) initiative based at the University of New Brunswick. The research framework involved a review by Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch, contacting the Eskasoni immersion school principal, the Eskasoni Education Director, Eskasoni Chief, and the Director of Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (the Mi'kmaq School Board) for approval of the visit and research.

Tuck (2009) illustrates how pain or loss are often documented within First Nations communities and offers one alternative to a damage-centered approach to research: to craft

research in a way that captures desire instead of damage. By having community and educator involvement in this paper, we acknowledge and celebrate the work of the Eskasoni First Nation in supporting Mi'kmaq language resurgence.

For this research, we use Indigenous autoethnographic narratives. Whitinui (2014) refers to Indigenous autoethnography as a culturally informed research practice and method of inquiry that is explicit in Indigenous ways of knowing. This portion of the paper depicts analysis of the transcripts of conversations with three Mi'kmaw immersion educators: the principal, the Grade 2 teacher, and the Ta'n L'nuey Etl-mawlukwatmumk Mi'kmaw Curriculum Development Centre Educator (TLE). To ensure a culturally preferred means of communication, the interviews were held face-to-face to interact with Indigenous educators on their terms.

We discuss the diversity of Mi'kmaq language speakers, and the benefits and challenges of having an immersion school, what the future looks like for Mi'kmaq immersion, and how technology is utilized in the schools and classrooms. From the recorded conversations, it is evident that Mi'kmaq immersion schools are required to support Mi'kmaq language resurgence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The findings from the three conversations with immersion educators support the five selected themes.

## Learning From the Conversations

### Learning With the Land

The importance of nurturing mother earth, Turtle Island, the homelands here on Mi'kma'ki, will help ensure the survival of its languages. The survival of Mi'kmaw language is scripted in the movement and flow of mother earth. The ideas of the *pedagogy of the land* and *land is pedagogy* teach that land provides and demands respect. The educators interviewed suggested that for many of the younger generation, relationships with the land are almost nonexistent. When the immersion educators were at the English school in the community, they were told to stay in the school, and had few opportunities for field trips. Now that they are in their own school, they want to take the students outside onto the land more. Outdoor education is needed; the educators agree that the purpose of learning the language is because it is useful in saying the words describing mother earth. One of the Eskasoni educators said, "At my age, I am forgetting a lot of Mi'kmaq words; there is no purpose anymore."<sup>3</sup> She continued,

If I went to go pick berries, I knew every plant and berry, the name of every part of the tree, I grew up with that. Lots has changed; at the other school, there is a little bush there with blackberries and I'd tell the kids to pick them...times have changed...apple trees are full of apples because no one is picking them anymore, all these little traditions are no longer practiced.

This example describes how simple steps like outdoor classrooms can educate children through the pedagogy of the land and advance the survival of Mi'kmaw and Indigenous languages. The results of colonialism have left Indigenous people understanding and feeling the urgency and necessity for restorative education programs and immersion schools.

The educators within the Eskasoni immersion school believe this is the first time in the past 15 years that there is so much content being delivered in the Mi'kmaq language. The immersion school continues to invite community members to come in as guest speakers, showing students survival skills for hunting and living on the land, all taught in the Mi'kmaq language.

The TLE educators contend that these teachings on the land instill respect in the students without them recognizing that they are being respectful to mother earth through tobacco offerings. They learn it implicitly. To date, the teachers are teaching the Mi'kmaq way of life within their classrooms through the language and noticed that they have not seen any major discipline problems. The TLE educators confirm, "Everyone is working well together and the students as well."

### **Eskasoni Involvement and Community Action Within**

Supportive actions are required in discourses of decolonized education (Battiste, 2013). Decolonized education confronts hidden racism, colonialism, and cognitive, cultural, and linguistic imperialism in modern curriculum. Decolonization reconciles contemporary education with Indigenous pedagogy without imposing Eurocentrism on Indigenous peoples and Indigenous ways of knowing. Decolonization allows for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to understand theory and research from an Indigenous perspective. Decolonizing actions demonstrate that academia can no longer deny Indigenous peoples' knowledge of their languages and cultural practices within education and institutions.

Having a Mi'kmaq educational system characterized by community members and Elder involvement is a powerful example of language resurgence in Eskasoni. Community members are providing resources for how languages should be used, recovered, and taught within immersion schools. As the Eskasoni principal said,

Since the school opened its doors, the immersion school has done what we could not do at our previous school. We can focus on community people and bring in speakers. Elders want to come see the school and speak to the students.

The Grade 2 teacher described how "we've had our own veteran services and *Nitap* (friend) Day, and we've celebrated with Mi'kmaw dancers and drummers." As the TLE educator said, "The education at the immersion school is becoming more meaningful and spiritual for students, teachers, and community members."

The educators of the Eskasoni immersion school are moving toward including a stronger input from the community. The Grade 2 educator noted, "Parents who bring their children to immersion, and who are fluent themselves, continue to speak to their children in English rather than Mi'kmaq. This needs to change." Educators who have fluent speaking children have to be constantly reminded: *l'nu'isit*, (speak in Mi'kmaq). The Eskasoni principal questioned:

Why can't parents get a kick out of hearing their own kids or grandkids speaking Mi'kmaq. That's the reality right now." The principal believes if the community and band council decided to have an emergency meeting to let the people know the state of the language, maybe then, there would be a difference in community action.

Supportive action comes from within and outside the school. From the outside, some non-Natives living in Eskasoni take an interest in the culture and language and speak better than the people who are Mi'kmaq. The principal says, "Supportive actions within the community are depicted in the street signs saying *naqa'si* (stop), so that's one step." Another action in Eskasoni included translating the street signs into Mi'kmaq, but that generated complaints by the

ambulance services who indicated that they could not find people because the signs are not readable or in English.

Outside of the immersion school, Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (MK) is doing a great deal of work in language resurgence. MK is initiating a master apprentice program where a fluent speaker collaborates with a learning speaker, and the speaker and learner spend a set number of hours per week learning the language. The intention is that the apprentices will use their certificates to teach the language.

### **Importance of the Eskasoni Immersion School**

The benefits of having a Mi'kmaw immersion school is that it is providing a safe place for Mi'kmaq speakers, where all day long students are exposed to Mi'kmaq language: in the hallways, in the classrooms, and outside for between five and six hours per day. Students converse in Mi'kmaq from the time they come into the school doors until they leave. The TLE educator, who has been teaching for 30 years, said,

Thirty years ago, you never heard English in the hallways, you never heard it anywhere, just in the classroom, now it's switched. You can hear the students speaking English even though they are in the immersion school, but as soon as the students are told *l'nu'isi* (speak Mi'kmaq), the students begin speaking in Mi'kmaq.

TLE educator continues, "As Mi'kmaq educators, it is necessary at times to remind the immersion students how important it is to speak in Mi'kmaq. Having this new immersion school is an enriching activity and enriching experiences for the students."

When the immersion school was a part of the English speaking school, the school announcements were in English. The staff, both Native and non-Native, spoke English. The immersion teachers felt that their language was not important because English was always the main language being spoken. As soon as students leave the immersion program, they begin speaking English again when they enter the English speaking school. This is discouraging for immersion teachers and community members who would like to see immersion go to Grade 12.

At the immersion school, in the Ta'n L'nuey Etl-mawlukwatmumk Mi'kmaw curriculum development unit, the Mi'kmaw educators have teachers requesting that they to produce and translate material in Mi'kmaq. Regarding these teachers, the TLE curriculum developer said,

I admire the teachers in the immersion program because they are a cohesive staff. Our teachers do a great deal of work outside the classroom; they support each other in developing their materials and ensure material[s] and classrooms look professional versus hand written. Our teachers are meeting the needs of emergent speakers, but also identifying that they need extra support.

The TLE educators help translate spelling books; for example, a primary English spelling book would translate into a Grade 3 or 4 Mi'kmaq spelling book with the vocabulary and content. In Mi'kmaq, there are only a handful of words with only a few letters, and the rest are words with multiple letters, for example red is "*mekwe'k*," and green is "*stoqnamu'k*." The language itself is sophisticated and complex. Mi'kmaq is a verb-oriented language; the words themselves might include a verb, a pronoun, and the object all embedded into one word, such as



“*nemi’atl*” (he or she sees him or her); the word is all in one. You don’t need “*nin*” (me) or “*nkem*” (him or her); it’s all in that verb. Both the immersion school teachers and TLE educators must do a great deal to promote the Mi’kmaq language in all its complexities, and really have to work on the spoken language in particular in order to ensure it continues into the next generation.

The challenge within the new immersion school is access to materials, curriculum documents, subjects, worksheets, and lesson plans in Mi’kmaq. The immersion teachers cannot simply access the provincial schoolbook bureau to order these books. With the help of TLE, teachers are producing materials, translating, and finding innovative ways to teach Mi’kmaq. Math is a tricky subject; it is a huge undertaking to translate and transcribe a math book, and expect the teachers to do this and teach as well. Currently in the math program, students learn a great deal of Mi’kmaq vocabulary but need to keep the English vocabulary for words that don’t exist in Mi’kmaq; for example, the English words for equal, odd, even, estimate, and balance are used.

### **Finding a Balance Using Technology**

Since Eskasoni opened their new school, the educators say they are in need of additional technology, such as smart boards, iPads, and laptops. Both teachers and students feel they would benefit by having access to websites such as First Nations helpdesk and MK to view their online apps, songs, dictionaries, and books in Mi’kmaq. The students are building their language vocabulary with digital media. There are still a couple of immersion teachers using older technology like the language master, a device that has a card that is inserted with a sentence in Mi’kmaq that the students repeat as the device reads the card. The Eskasoni immersion school has a graphic artist in TLE who is able to produce digitized artwork to go with published books.

The challenges with relying on technology to learn Mi’kmaq for new learners is that it is not as effective as having a resource or fluent teachers present with students who can respond to a variety of questions as compared to new learners simply repeating words using technology. One of the Eskasoni educators often finds the online Mi’kmaq dictionaries are missing words, or the words are not accurate because they are in a different dialect. It would be beneficial if one could access the different dialects on the online Mi’kmaq dictionaries, making it more accessible for all Mi’kma’ki.

Finding a balance in using technology involves locating and identifying the enrichment available, such as video recordings. Since the Eskasoni immersion school began, they have been recording events, drumming and dancing, kojua dancing, and arts and crafts such as basket weaving. The Grade 2 teacher described the value of these resources: “Videos are valuable in the classrooms as students can be revisited them, and for younger students, they will see their family, their cousins, or themselves in them. Videos help enrich and inform and educate the community as well.”

In Eskasoni, they have a community television channel where videos can be shared for parents and community members to watch classes of immersion students speaking Mi’kmaq, learning to Ko’jua, or singing and chanting the honour song in Mi’kmaq. The Ko’jua is a traditional dance to the Mi’kmaq and the Ko’jua songs were sung using a *ji’kmaqn* (split ash splints bound together at one end).

To ensure that the immersion teachers are up to date with technology, MK has helped teachers with professional development courses on how to turn digitized recordings into online books for Mi'kmaq material development. "These ways of using technology are successful when teachers record Elders in the community sharing old stories and traditions in Mi'kmaq that can be accessed later by the students as digital online books," the TLE educator explained.

### **Cultural and Language Survival in Mi'kmaq Communities**

Indigenous languages are the most important component to the survival of Indigenous knowledges, ways of knowing, cultural practices, land-based pedagogies, and for connection to the spirit world. According to Battiste (2013), it is through the sharing and survival of Indigenous languages that one creates an Indigenous cognitive experience, understanding, and legacy of Aboriginal life.

Language is the central source of spiritual and cultural survival. Sacred prophecies are sacred predictions that foretold that the seventh generation of Indigenous peoples, the generation that is now educators in the 21<sup>st</sup> century hold the responsibilities of language resurgence, and the eighth generation will continue language survival for the next seven generations to come (Simpson, 2008). As the Grade 2 teacher said,

We need to keep in mind that in the generations before us, language educators were referred to as pioneer teachers, the hard knock teachers, and these teachers were really enthused about using the language and getting the children to speak the language.

The principal said, "Teachers today in the immersion school are young speakers, the young generation; they are still learning the language and must be reminded to be persistent in getting the kids to speak the Mi'kmaq language."

Strong culture and language in education embeds pride in students and builds confidence in their speaking and motor skills. Teaching the language within immersion schools makes both students and teachers more culturally aware. As the TLE educator stated,

The students are learning the language, learning the culture, values, customs and traditions that students are not getting in a regular English curriculum. Mi'kmaq students studying in a Nova Scotia Social Studies course only receive minimal information on their history and culture, whereas in an immersion school, students are not only getting a language but also learning their way of life, their history; they are getting a well- rounded Mi'kmaq education and students are learning about themselves.

The English language has become the predominantly used language in Mi'kmaq communities over the last two or more generations. Immersion programming is one effective method that has proven successful for language retention, revitalization, and resurgence, and for creating fluent language speakers. The Eskasoni immersion school is now the language nest for Eskasoni and its early childhood fluent speakers.

In Mi'kma'ki, the Mi'kmaq language has distinct dialects across the seven districts: one is that of Smith Francis and another is that of the Pacific way, created by Elder Milliea who was in charge of teaching the writing system. The principal noted:

This distinction has added confusion when we share material across the districts within immersion schools. The Mi'kmaq language spoken three to five generations ago can now be heard as old Mi'kmaq. Although there is a distinction between the writing systems and dialects, teachers do not see anything wrong with that because, now, the important part is ensuring the students are speaking the Mi'kmaq language.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study with the Eskasoni immersion school helps develop new understandings of the five theoretical themes for framing language resurgence. These themes help further enrich this understanding of what language resurgence means. Through the Eskasoni immersion school, teachers are educating in the Mi'kmaq language, and through the language, children are learning not to be ashamed of being Mi'kmaq. The language teaches cultural pride, values, customs, and respect for Mi'kmaq history, and it builds towards the future of the next seven generations to come. It is relevant for Mi'kmaq communities to celebrate the success of the Eskasoni First Nation as they pave the way for future Mi'kmaq immersion schools, Mi'kmaq curriculum, and the development of content and material. The Eskasoni immersion school is contributing to the larger Mi'kmaq territory by ensuring there are Mi'kmaq speakers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For the Mi'kmaq Nation, their Mi'kmaq language may be facing extinction among other Indigenous language across Turtle Island (North America). The dominant English language is everywhere and immersion schools within Mi'kmaq communities provide one step to ensuring the survival of the Mi'kmaq Nation. This study intends to encourage all Indigenous peoples who are striving to save their language by building language nests and taking action through initiating immersion schools.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Mi'kmaq refers to singular, and Mi'kmaw refers to the nation or people.

<sup>2</sup> There are many terms that identify First Nation peoples of Canada today in academia and government legislation. In this paper, I will use the term Mi'kmaq and Indigenous interchangeably and they refer to Aboriginal, First Nations, Native, and Indian in context.

<sup>3</sup> Interviews with Grandmother conducted by Ashley Julian in October 2014. All interviews with the Eskasoni immersion educators were conducted by Ashley Julian in November 2015.